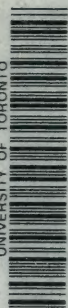


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SOCIAL FRANCE IN THE  
XVII CENTURY













LOUIS XIV, THE DAUPHIN, THE DUC DE BOURGOGNE, THE DUC D'ANJOU (AFTERWARDS  
LOUIS XV), AND MADAME DE MAINTENON  
FROM THE PAINTING BY FARGHIERE. WALLACE COLLECTION

# SOCIAL FRANCE IN THE XVII CENTURY

BY  
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WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN & CO. LTD.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON

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## PREFACE

THE seventeenth century is a peculiarly baffling one because it appears on the surface so simple. It is simple because the *Mémoires* dealing with the upper classes are as excellent as they are numerous ; it is difficult to understand because the peasant and the tradesman of the period are elusive persons who will not stand and deliver any information about themselves.

“L'état, c'est moi” is a truism which has become a household word ; but a too ready acceptance of it as a truth places the student on the wrong road at the very outset of his pilgrimage. Never was a more heterogeneous collection of ideals, precepts and codes of morals presented for the acceptance of a nation than at this time. Never did nation comport itself in a more interesting manner than the French while engaged in the process of selection, and of co-ordinating the matter selected. Hence it follows that the subject of this book is a very wide one, and I cannot claim to have dealt with even one section of it in full. The only aim of this sketch has been to represent the general aspect of the century in a few rough strokes, here and there filled in, but more often left bare. It deals chiefly with the minor ideals and hopes of mankind which form the principal difference between one age and another. We share the larger ambitions of our fathers, but we do not enjoy the

same things. Which of us could bring himself to work straight through a seventeenth-century menu? What woman would consent to wear rolls of muslin like organ-pipes all day long upon her tired head? Who can read ten volumes in praise of Aminta and her compeers of fine-sounding name without fatigue? Why did the sorrows of Céladon move the seventeenth century to tears, when the parting between Hector and Andromache left it cold?

Much has been said about the Court and about Society in the narrower sense of the word, because their claim to monopolise the undivided attention of posterity was a plausible one. The pompous figure of Louis XIV. occupies so large a space on the canvas of the seventeenth century that all but his more immediate followers are obscured. As in a certain fine portrait, the hills of France rise faint and blue behind him, but no eye can discern on them the ploughman ploughing or the shepherd keeping his sheep. Yet it is in the great army of the poor, who "lived untrumpeted and died unsung," that the chief interest of the period lies. It has already been observed that few records of them have come down to us. M. Babeau has collected much curious information relative to the daily life of those who rose up early to reap the corn or weave the purple and the sackcloth flaunted by the rest of the nation. M. de Vaissière has constituted himself the historian of the poorer country gentleman. M. Feillet has written a most moving description of peasant life during the Fronde. The *Relations* of the Missioners of Saint Vincent de Paul also contain much valuable matter. But the peasant himself is inarticulate, and can tell us naught about himself.

At the end of the book will be found a bibliography of

the books which I have chiefly used, and to whose authors I here gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness.

The political history of the period is so complicated, and at the same time so closely bound up with the domestic life of the nation, that a brief historical introduction appeared necessary. This summary of political events is only meant to serve as a help to the understanding of social conditions otherwise, perhaps, unintelligible.

It only remains for me to thank the friends who have given me generous aid during the progress of my work. I am but one of many students who owe to Mr E. Armstrong of Queen's College, Oxford, their start upon the path of History. His kind encouragement led me to begin this book, and his experience and learning have all through the work of writing it been at my disposal.

C. H.



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# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF EVENTS

FROM 1598 TO 1715

598	Edict of Nantes, April 5. Peace of Vervins with Spain.	1614	Revolt of Nobles. States-general held. Richelieu first comes to the fore. Retz born.
599	Death of Gabrielle d'Estrées.	1615	Louis XIII. married.
600	Henri IV. marries M. de' Medici. Plots against King. Claude Gelée born.	1616	Fresh league of nobles. Richelieu and Luynes rise to power. Condé arrested.
601	Acquisition of Bresse and Burgundy.	1617	Concini murdered. Richelieu and Marie de' Medici exiled.
602			
603	Eliz. of England dies. Jesuits again allowed in France.	1618	Luynes in power.
604	Plots against King.	1619	Protestant rising. Lebrun born.
605		1620	
606	Corneille born.	1621	Death of Luynes. La Fontaine and Mme. de Motteville born.
607	Mlle. de Scudéry born.	1622	Molière and Puget born.
608	Quebec founded.	1623	Pascal born. Richelieu re-enters Council.
609			
610	Murder of Henri IV., May 3. Mme. de Rambouillet begins to entertain. Mignard born.	1624	War with Spain in Valentinois.
		1625	War with Protestants.
611	Mayenne dies. Sully retires from superintending the Finances.	1626	Duc de Chevreuse plots with Gaston against Louis XIII. Mme. de Sévigné born.
612	Louis XIII.'s marriage treaty with Spain.	1627	Grande Mademoiselle born. Execution of noblemen for duelling. Regulations made for postal system.
613	Lenôtre born.		

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1628	Rochelle falls.	1648	Journée des Barricades, Aug. 26-27. Treaty of Westphalia. Nuns first inhabit Port-Royal. Bad harvest. Voiture dies.
1629	Peace of Alais puts an end to religious war. War of succession of Mantua.		
1630	Marie de' Medici flies to Brussels, where she ultimately dies. Journée des dupes.	1649	Jan. 6-7, Court flies to Saint-Germain. "Fronde princière" begins. Charles I. executed.
1631			
1632	Revolt of Gaston and Montmorency. The latter is executed.	1650	Condé and other princes arrested. Descartes dies. Plague breaks out.
1633			
1634		1651	Mazarin banished. Princes set free. Union of two Frondes. Fénelon born. Great floods.
1635	French participation in Thirty Years' War until 1643.	1652	King returns to Paris, Oct. 21. Retz arrested. Condé revolts. Battle of Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Mademoiselle leaves Court.
1636	Boileau born. S. Vincent's Missioners' work in Lorraine till 1645.		
1637	Descartes' <i>Discours sur la Méthode</i> published.	1653	Mazarin re-enters Paris, Feb. 3. Some of his nieces arrive.
1638	Louis XIV. born.	1654	Coronation of Louis XIV.
1639	Racine born.	1655	Lesueur dies.
1640	Beginnings of Jansenism.	1656	<i>Lettres Provinciales</i> , issued. Price of corn again normal.
1641	Mme. de Montespan born. Fresh revolts.		
1642	Marie de' Medici and Richelieu die. Execution of Cinquars.	1657	Mademoiselle recalled.
		1658	
1643	Louis XIII. dies.	1659	Traité des Pyrénées with Spain. <i>Précieuses Ridicules</i> acted.
1644	Hen. Maria of England takes refuge in France. Eliz., Queen of Spain dies. La Bruyère born.	1660	Louis XIV. marries Marie Thérèse. Gaston dies.
1645			
1646	Charles, Prince of Wales, in France.	1661	Mazarin dies. Fouquet arrested. Monsieur marries Hen. of England. Angélique Arnauld dies. Bossuet preaches at Versailles.
1647			

1662	Mlle. de la Vallière flies to a convent. Pascal dies.	1680	Mlle. de Fontanges at Court Ascendancy of Mme. de Maintenon. La Rochefoucauld dies.
1663	Massillon born. Mlle. de la Vallière openly established at Court.	1681	Persecution of Huguenots. Strasbourg becomes French. Mlle. de Fontanges dies, aged 20.
1664		1682	Court life at Versailles regulated. No more royal mistresses. Claude Gélée dies.
1665	War with England. Poussin dies.	1683	Death of Queen and of Colbert.
1666	Anne of Austria dies.	1684	King marries Mme. de Maintenon (1685?) Corneille dies. Watteau born.
1667	War with Flanders. Mlle. de la Vallière made a duchess.	1685	Mme. de Montespan leaves the court for a time. Revocation of Edict of Nantes, Oct. 17.
1668	Truce between Jesuits and Jansenists. Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. Bourdaloue preaches.	1686	Condé dies.
1669		1687	
1670	Secret Treaty of Dover. Henriette d'Angleterre dies suddenly. Mademoiselle's marriage with Lauzun forbidden. Court goes with army.	1688	War with England.
1671		1689	Mme. de Motteville dies
1672	Invasion of Holland. Poison scare.	1690	Hôtel de Rambouillet ends. Lebrun dies. Mme. de Montespan leaves Court for good.
1673	Taking of Maestricht. Molière dies.	1691	War in Piedmont and Low Countries. Montesquieu born.
1674	Mlle. de la Vallière becomes a nun. Turenne saves Alsace.	1692	Battle of Steinkirk. Marriages of Duc du Maine and Duc de Chartres.
1675	Death of Turenne. Molinos' <i>Guide spirituel</i> published.	1693	Le Grande Mademoiselle dies.
1676	Mme. de Brinvilliers executed. Naval victories against Dutch.	1694	Puget dies. Voltaire born.
1677		1695	Mignard, La Fontaine and Nicole die. Duchesse de Berri born.
1678		1696	La Bruyère and Mme. de Sévigné die. Mme. Guyon arrested. Marriage of Duc de Bourgogne.
1679	General pacification. Retz dies. Trianon and Marly being built. Mme. de Longueville dies.		

1697	Peace of Ryswick.	1707	Mme. de Montespan dies.
1698		1708	French defeated at Oudenarde
1699	Racine dies.	1709	France and Spain more successful, but lose Battle of Malplaquet.
1700	Lenôtre dies. Philippe d'Anjou becomes Ph. V. of Spain.	1710	Very bad winter; great misery.
1701	Third Coalition against France. Mlle. de Scudéry dies. War in Italy, Germany and Low Countries.	1711	Grand Dauphin and Boileau die.
1702	„	1712	Duc de Bourgogne, his wife and eldest son die.
1703	„	1713	Treaty of Utrecht.
1704	„	1714	Duc de Berri, son of Grand Dauphin, dies.
1705	Mme. de Grignan dies.	1715	Louis XIV. dies on Sept. 1, aged 77. Fénelon dies.
1706	Ninon de Lenclos dies.		

## PRESENT VALUE OF FRENCH COINS MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK \*

GOLD	-	<i>louis</i>	=	4 <i>écus</i>	=	23 f. 84 cent. (modern currency)
SILVER	-	<i>écu</i>	=	6 <i>livres</i>	=	5 f. 96 cent.
		<i>livre</i>	=	20 <i>sous</i>	=	·9876 f. (nearly a franc)
COPPER	-	<i>sou</i>	=	4 <i>liards</i>	=	·0494 f. (nearly 5 cent.).
		<i>liard</i>	=	3 <i>deniers</i> .		

\* These values are only approximate, owing to the constant fluctuation of the coinage throughout the century. They represent, however, with more or less accuracy the coinage as it was reorganised by Louis XIV. in 1655.



*Wagner :* Verzeiht ! Es ist ein gross Ergötzen  
Sich in den Geist der Zeiten zu versetzen . . .  
*Faust :* Mein Freund, die Zeiten der Vergangenheit  
Sind uns ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln.

—GOETHE

## INTRODUCTION

SURVEY OF POLITICAL EVENTS BETWEEN THE YEARS  
1598 AND 1715

THE crooked counsels thrust upon Catherine de' Medici had brought forth evil fruit, and when Henri III., the last and most perfidious of her sons, lay murdered at Saint-Cloud, the populace cried out that *Henri de Valois* spelt "*De Gavlois Ruine*." France was in a state of anarchy almost impossible for us to realise. The religious wars and the fatal ambition of the greater families, in addition to financial and other disorders in the administration, had reduced the country to a state approaching atrophy. Ruined villages, devastated crops and laden gallows proclaimed the recent passage of armies. Thieving gangs of cut-throats infested the public roads. The revenues of the provinces were pocketed by the governor, who regarded them as his hereditary right, or by lesser officials who abstracted what they could before passing them on to their superiors. Foreign commerce had as yet received little impulse, and trade within the country had been destroyed by the wars. Few men had the courage to trust their neighbours, and each one lived for himself or for a party struggling for merely private interests. The state, as such, had no adherents, and the Church fanned the flame by approving the short-shrift methods of the League in dealing with heresy.

Over this Miltonic chaos, Henri of Navarre found himself nominal ruler on the death of his brother-in-law in 1589. The nine years which elapsed between this date and that of

## 2 XVII CENTURY LIFE IN FRANCE

his final triumph in 1598 (signalised by the issue of a great edict of religious toleration), are among the most momentous of French history. Napoleon, though he had a more extended, had not a more difficult programme to execute. As a Huguenot, Henri IV. was obnoxious to the Catholic portion of the nation represented by the various parties within the League: as a Bourbon, the head of another royal house, he was viewed with bitter jealousy by his distant cousins of Lorraine and Savoy, who thought their claim to France as good as his. All who would gain by continued anarchy were also against him. For him were the Huguenots and those few Catholics who were sufficiently ahead of their age to perceive that the religious question is not one to be settled by the argument of the sword, and that the common weal is best secured by a government that does not disqualify a man from holding office because he does or does not fast in Lent. Henri now set himself to crush this hydra of rebellion by a well-directed scheme of attack, by an astuteness unparalleled in history, and by proving to all sensible men that, apart from other considerations, he was the ablest man in France, and therefore the most competent to rule it.

The greater part of the country became his by conquest on the surrender of provinces by governors who preferred to make a virtue of what would shortly become a necessity. The victory at Ivry in 1590 first broke the strength of the League and opened the way to Paris for the Royalists. Later, battles and internal discord in the Catholic ranks achieved its destruction as a national party, in spite of one or two dying efforts, prompted by Spanish promises of aid, against the heretic ruler. But even this pretext for opposition to law was soon to be removed. Paris had been taken in 1593 after a terrible siege; this victory was but the prelude to another even more far-reaching in its results. Henri perceived that by becoming a Catholic he would be depriving his enemies of

their chief weapon against him, for even those who were in their heart indifferent to the religious question, acknowledged its importance by using it to cloak their private motives for rebellion. Paris was, he felt, well worth a Mass. The siege was therefore followed by the King's conversion and his entry into the capital. The coronation took place at Chartres in 1594. The last stragglers of the routed party of the League were forced to submit. The Dukes of Epemon, Joyeuse, Mercœur and others, were gained by promises of governments in the provinces and even by large sums of money, and a treaty of peace with Spain, clearly defining the boundaries of the two countries, was signed at Vervins in 1598. It was, however, the signing of the Edict of Nantes that proclaimed Henri one of the founders of modern history. By winning over the Catholics, he had drawn upon himself the distrust of the more bigoted Huguenots. By ensuring religious liberty to both, he gained the support of all lovers of peace and order of either persuasion. The benefits accruing to the country from this far-sighted policy made themselves felt almost immediately, but their extent was not fully realised until the ill-judged revocation of the edict in the last years of the seventeenth century. The final stages in the decline of French prosperity date from that fatal day. The intention of this edict was made sufficiently clear by Henri's action in erecting a gallows by the Porte Saint-Antoine, "whereon to hang any person of either religion who should be found so bold as to attempt anything against the public peace."

Henri, having thus laid the foundations of order, now turned his attention to administration proper. With the aid of Maximilien de Béthune, afterwards Duc de Sully, he reorganised the levying of taxes, compelled all officials to render up strict account of their charges, and stopped the leakage of the public funds into the pockets of underlings. A new source of revenue to the country was the tax called

"La Paulette." This was a yearly percentage on their incomes paid by certain officials, who thereby acquired the right of transmitting their office to their sons. In this way originated that class of hereditary magistrates which Louis XIV. so greatly delighted in playing off against the older nobility. Agriculture and commerce received a fresh impetus : the former very largely by means of a book on farming by the Protestant Olivier de Serres ; the latter by the foundation of silk mills in large towns, such as Orleans. The army and navy were reorganised, and roads and canals were built. The country districts again became green, and even if the poorer peasants lacked the boiled fowl that Henri hoped to see established as the staple Sunday dinner of the lowest classes, bread and even meat were normally almost plentiful.

The King's foreign policy was equally original. Potentates who aimed at undue conquest, such as the heads of the House of Austria, were compelled to moderate their claims, and the balance of power became the basis on which was to be founded the peace of Europe. Even the Moors and Turks were allied by treaty to the great King. Henri had divorced his wife, Marguerite of Valois, and united himself to the Pope's niece, Marie de' Medici. An heir was born in 1601, and Henri's reign promised to be a prosperous one. He was, however, still viewed with distrust by the scattered remnants of the League, who could not bring themselves to believe in the sincerity of his conversion. A few fanatics were to be found who scented heresy under every disguise, and who deemed that all means were justifiable when the end was its final extirpation. There had already been nineteen attempts on Henri's life before 1610. The twentieth, made in the May of that year, was successful. The King was poinarded while driving in the Rue Saint-Honoré by a madman named Ravailac, and died on the spot, leaving the kingdom to his son, Louis XIII.



The new King being only nine years old, his mother assumed the office of Regent. Sully remained the chief minister. Marie was, however, quite incapable of appreciating the precarious state of a country in which the various discordant elements were still like chained dogs waiting to fly at each others' throats. She rashly loosened the chains, and the unhappy kingdom again fell a prey to anarchy. Her first step was to create a friendly understanding with the House of Austria by marrying the King to the Infanta Anne of Austria, and his sister to the heir to the Spanish throne. Sully was dismissed, and the Queen took as her next adviser a Florentine upstart named Concini, whose wife, Leonora Galigai, was her foster-sister. This ambitious couple now proceeded to build up for themselves an enormous fortune at the expense of the Crown. In this they were but imitating the unedifying example of the greater nobles, who accepted high positions and demanded preposterous privileges as the price of their allegiance. The latter they threw off as soon as the treasury was empty. So fine a game as that of the sword was not one from which such men could long abstain. A fresh struggle for their old privileges was therefore initiated by Condé, Soissons and Guise, on the pretext that no gentleman of France could or ought to tolerate the insolence of the Queen's Italian favourites. The townsfolk and lower classes generally, having learnt from experience what to expect from these great persons, miserably held aloof from the struggle, while their crops were trampled down by both sides impartially. Strong action would have reduced Condé and his friends to reason; but the Queen had not the courage for high-handed methods, and a peace was patched up at Saint-Ménéhould in the same year. Mayenne received 300,000 livres "for his wedding expenses," and the other princes were bought off at a similar rate. A States-General, the last before the Revolution, was then called to

## 6 XVII CENTURY LIFE IN FRANCE

take steps for the better ordering of the country, but no important resolution was made, owing to the perpetual quarrels between the three Estates. The clergy declared that the honour of God would suffer if their order were compelled to pay taxes like the commonalty. The nobles took offence quite early in the proceedings, and complained to the King that a deputy of the bourgeoisie had dared to assert that all Frenchmen formed a single family under the Sovereign. It was therefore announced that the room where the debates took place was wanted for a ballet; the assembly broke up, and confusion reigned as before. A fresh revolt was organised by Condé just at the time when the solemn exchange of princesses was to be effected at the frontier. Skirmishing bands of dissatisfied Protestants, who had rallied round Condé, dogged the royal party throughout the journey, and the young Infanta found that she needed the protection of a Royalist army to escort her to her husband's capital. Again resort was had to the Dane-geld expedient, and a very costly peace was signed at Loudun in May 1616. Condé spent the money, and another revolt would no doubt have soon fallen due, had not a greater man than he begun to make a way for himself on the stage of French history. Armand du Plessis de Richelieu had already attracted public attention by his harangues as the representative of the clergy at a debate of the States-General. Concini, who was no fool, procured for young Richelieu a high position in the Government, and eagerly watched what promised to be an interesting situation. He had not long to wait. First, Condé and some of his astonished allies were arrested and imprisoned in the Bastille. Their extortion and iniquity were plainly put before the Queen; they were degraded from their dignities and their partisans pursued by Royalist armies. Here a diversion from an unexpected quarter checked the course of events. The King, for whom the training of hawks was the

greatest thing life had to offer, had taken into his favour a country gentleman named Charles Albert de Luynes, who excelled in the art. Louis was now sixteen years old, and tutelage had begun to irritate him. In a fit of impatience with Concini, now Maréchal d'Ancre, he commanded the captain of the guard to arrest him. In the case of resistance he was to be slain. The order was executed and Concini fell. His wife was promptly accused of sorcery and likewise executed. The Queen-Mother was banished to Blois, and Luynes, having persuaded the King to exile Richelieu to his diocese, took the reins of power into his own hands. Rebellion now became even more frequent and complicated. Condé and his party, whom the turn of the tables had again set free, soon forgot their gratification at the death of Concini in their alarm and haughty disgust at the fortune of Luynes. Wounded pride drove them into the opposite camp. The Queen-Mother was rescued from prison in a manner worthy of a mediæval romance, and several skirmishes took place on her behalf until peace was once more restored. Luynes was, however, cut off at the height of his power by a fever, contracted during a campaign against the Huguenots, who had again taken up arms.

At this point Richelieu returned to power, owing to the fact that Louis, no longer having Luynes to support him, was only too glad to be reconciled to his mother. The bishop's policy had been well defined from the first. It was threefold : to lower the pretensions of the great ; to raise the position of France among the nations ; and to annihilate the Protestants *as a political party*. No time was lost in executing this programme. In 1626 a rebellion under Gaston, the King's turbulent brother, was put down with a firm hand, and the execution of the Comte de Chalais, one of the moving spirits, revealed to his peers what their position was from henceforth to be. In 1627 two noblemen were put



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to death for having infringed the law against duelling. In 1630 the Queen herself suffered a reverse. She had prevailed upon the King to dismiss Richelieu, whose policy she knew to be prejudicial to her favourite son, Gaston. But as the courtiers were flocking to congratulate her, the father of the great Saint-Simon pointed out to the King how serious a step he was about to take in exposing the country to renewed misgovernment. Richelieu was reinstated and Marie de' Medici fled to Brussels. Her part on the stage of history was now played.

Gaston seized this opportunity for a fresh revolt. He took the field with Montmorency, the Governor of Languedoc, but was at once defeated and exiled to Blois. His position as heir-presumptive saved his head, but Montmorency was executed, in spite of the efforts of his compeers of both parties. His fate did not, however, deter the Comte de Soissons from attempting a further conspiracy. He himself was killed in a skirmish, but his associate, Cinq-Mars, was afterwards detected in an intrigue with Spain and executed. He was only twenty-one years old. Nor did Richelieu stop here. About two hundred gentlemen were tried in Auvergne for a variety of crimes. All unnecessary fortresses were destroyed, and the supreme command of army and navy was from henceforward to be disposed of according to the King's pleasure. The administrative government of the provinces was placed in the hands of royal stewards, called Intendants. The Protestants were at the same time brought to submission. The taking of La Rochelle in 1628 had removed from them all hope of remaining a self-governing body, but freedom of worship, with certain limitations, was allowed them. Richelieu's desire to dissociate politics from the religious question appears in his machinations to bring about alliances with Protestant powers, such as that cemented by the marriage of the King's sister with our Charles I. France

took a successful part in the Thirty Years' War in alliance with Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden and the Germans against the House of Austria. Art and literature were beginning to thrive. The great programme was all but carried out when the cardinal succumbed to a painful disease, at the age of fifty-seven. Louis XIII. died six months later, having appointed a council to control the action of his widow as long as her Regency lasted. His heir, Louis XIV., was five years old.

Anne of Austria, a woman whom Louis XIII. had done only too well to distrust, at once induced the Parliament to annul the King's will, and proceeded to rule with the advice of a clique consisting of the Duc de Beaufort, the intriguing Duchesse de Chevreuse and others of like mind. Their arrogance, however, irritated the Queen, and an attempted assassination of her chief minister, an Italian trained by Richelieu, caused the party to be broken up. The minister in question was the celebrated Mazarin. Meanwhile two great generals, Turenne and the Duc d'Enghien (known to history as the Great Condé), were waging a successful campaign against the Spaniards. This nation had refused to sign the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), and the war dragged on till Mazarin, having allied himself with Cromwell, compelled the enemy to come to terms. The Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed in 1659, and Louis XIV. was affianced to the Infanta Maria Theresa.

But foreign warfare was not the only evil with which the French nation had to contend. Internal dissensions of the most fatal kind were depopulating the land and reducing even rich men to a state of beggary. So extraordinary a war, treated as a jest by the princes at its head, fought for no public end, alone taken seriously by those whose only share in it was passive suffering, well deserves the name of "Fronde." It arose in this way. Mazarin's mismanagement

of the finances, the rapacity of favourites, and the march of armies over the country, had brought about a grave economic crisis. Parliament having protested against certain flagrant abuses of the royal prerogative, Mazarin sought to check such opposition by arresting three of the most important magistrates. This was done on the very day when a Te Deum was to be sung in Notre-Dame to return thanks for Condé's great victory at Sens. In an instant the town was in an uproar and over two hundred barricades were erected by the populace to protect their representatives. Molé, the President, was forced by an angry mob to demand the release of Broussel, one of the imprisoned members, and Anne of Austria yielded, owing, it is said, to the entreaties of the exiled Queen of England. Peace was thus temporarily restored. Still, Mazarin had no intention of allowing himself to be dictated to by a municipal body. On 6th February he fled from Paris with the Queen-Mother and her son, refusing to re-enter it until the city had submitted.

Matters would now have arrived at a deadlock, had not the princes, such as Bouillon, Conti and Longueville, immediately espoused the cause of the Parliament. Strife, no matter what its object, was to them the salt of life. For them also were Turenne and the famous Paul de Gondi, notorious as the Cardinal de Retz. Condé alone offered his services to the Queen. This ridiculous war was opened by a series of skirmishes. The Parisians, unused to fighting, fled at the first charge, were laughed at by both sides, and consoled themselves at night with tavern-drinking and the composition of songs against Mazarin. Women, such as the Duchesse de Longueville, played at intriguing as they had formerly played at cards. Hats and dresses, *à la Fronde*, became the fashion, and wisps of straw were worn as a badge of insurgency. Society life continued as usual among the

great, while the poor in the country died of ills worse than starvation and pestilence.

A second peace was occasioned by the rashness of the princes in attempting to form an alliance with Spain against the royal party. Parliament hereupon hastened to paralyse the action of its nominal allies by coming to terms with the Court, and in April 1649 the King returned to his capital. But discord was bound to break out again immediately in a country in which every one strove for his own interests. Condé's arrogance repeatedly led him to insult Mazarin, provoke the Queen, and offend the susceptibility of most of his equally hot-headed friends. Mazarin therefore seized a favourable opportunity and caused him to be arrested in the Louvre. His brother Conti and the Duc de Longueville were imprisoned with him. Turenne, who was ravaging the south at the head of a Spanish army, was defeated. Meanwhile Mazarin had not fulfilled his promise of giving Retz, Bishop-Coadjutor of Paris, a cardinal's hat on condition that he submitted. Retz, who delighted in war, therefore raised the populace and reconciled the party of the princes with the Parliament. Princes, clergy and people thus miraculously united, forced the Regent to free the prisoners and send Mazarin out of the country. Condé was still not satisfied; sufficient notice had not been taken of him, and the thought of his imprisonment still galled his pride. He accordingly whirled through the country stirring up rebellion, calling in Spain, snatching at any chance of outside support from whatever quarter. Turenne, now a Royalist again, marched to give battle to his former comrade-in-arms, and the two generals met in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine outside Paris. The city refused to admit either party, and the citizens flocked to the walls to watch the battle. The Royalists were on the point of being victorious when Mademoiselle, the daughter of Gaston d'Orléans, took it upon herself to have a cannonade from



the Bastille directed against Turenne's army. The latter retreated and Condé entered Paris. His restlessness, however, soon drove him into the field again, and his next step was to lead an army, mainly composed of his own friends, into Flanders, with whose Spanish rulers he was on amicable terms.

In 1653 a definite change took place in public feeling. The Queen, who had again left the capital, was begged to return. Condé, well out of his enemies' reach, was ineffectively condemned to death. A long imprisonment furnished Retz with ample leisure to catalogue his complaints and plan fresh adventures. Gaston was exiled to his fine castle at Blois, and certain citizens were punished for having ventured to dispute the supreme authority. Finally, Mazarin returned to find the finances in even a more hopeless condition than when he left them, the country full of foreign soldiers murdering and stealing for a livelihood, and the provincial nobility ruined. The royal family was itself so poor that the Crown jewels had to be pawned to furnish the King's table. No attempt was made to rectify these ills, and when Mazarin died in 1661, Louis found himself at the head of a country that resembled nothing so much as Pandora's box, with himself as its only hope. It is one of the anomalies of history that Louis XIV. should have been a very remarkable King and a very ordinary person. Saint-Simon, perhaps a little maliciously, describes him as a man having an intellect below the average, but an extraordinary ability for profiting by the spectacle of other people's conduct. "He loved glory and desired law and order. He was born prudent, moderate, master of his secrets, his actions and his tongue. Can one believe it? He was born good and just, and God had given him enough virtue to be a good king, perhaps even a great king." It was to outside influences alone that he owed his faults. He had been educated from boyhood to regard

absolute monarchy as the only right form of government. His little fingers learnt to write from copies such as "Aux rois est dû l'hommage; ils font ce qui leur plaît," and in his *Mémoires* he wrote in after years: "He who gave kings to men ordered that they should be respected as His lieutenants, reserving for Himself alone the right to examine their conduct. His will is that every one born a subject should obey without question."

With these views to direct his actions, Louis XIV. took the government of his great patrimony into his hands at the age of twenty-three. His chief ministers were Le Tellier and Fouquet. The latter was soon convicted of embezzling the public funds, and died in prison, after nineteen years of captivity. His successor, Colbert, was one of the greatest financiers that ever lived; he was at the same time an honest man. The details of internal administration had been neglected since the days of Henry IV. and Sully; Richelieu had been otherwise occupied; taxes had multiplied, industry had been ruined. Colbert set himself to economise, to build, to facilitate colonisation. Not the least important part of his programme was the encouragement of art and science. Louvois undertook the reform of the army. All worked together to make France a great power in Europe and the King the supreme authority in France. With this end in view, the Court was made the centre of social life, and no one not constantly seen there could hope to make his fortune. The semblance of power alone was left to the nobility; the King was in truth the state, and that state was glorious.

A large part of the reign was occupied in foreign warfare, first to win Flanders, which Louis claimed as the heritage of his Spanish wife, then with Holland and the Triple Alliance. This European struggle was brought to a close in 1679. At a later date Strasburg and the Franche-Comté were also re-united to France. James II. was harboured and aided

by Louis against William of Orange. Further campaigns in Holland and a war with Amadeus of Savoy continued to exhaust the exchequer, so that all were glad when the Peace of Ryswick was signed in 1697. Three years later occurred an event which again plunged Europe into long and bitter warfare. Charles II. of Spain, furious at William's proposal to partition his domains after his death, nominated Philip of Anjou, the Dauphin's second son, as his heir. The fear that, should the prince's brother die, the two kingdoms would be united under him, caused the greater powers to ally themselves against Louis. The battles of Marlborough and Prince Eugène are too famous to need mention here. It was not till 1713 that the war was closed by the signing of the Peace of Utrecht.

But the fortunes of France had for some time been on the wane, and she had suffered several noteworthy defeats abroad. Louis had grown into a morose and exacting old man, preyed on by scruples and blind to realities. Having discarded the last of his mistresses, he had married the widow of a crippled poet, that sphinx-like mystery, *Françoise de Maintenon*. In an evil moment he had also repealed the great Edict of Nantes. A large bulk of the Protestant population escaped from the country to avoid persecution, and those who remained suffered incredible things. Finally, the King lost in the course of two years his son the Dauphin, his grandson the second Dauphin, the wife of the latter, their eldest son the next heir, and the Duc de Berri, the son of the first Dauphin. He himself died in 1715, leaving the dissolute Duc d'Orléans to rule in the name of his great-grandson, the future Louis XV.

The chief phenomena in the long period from 1598 to 1715 are those produced by a conflict between chaos and law. The able administration of Henri IV. had established the rudiments of orderly government. His theories without

his genius were inherited by subsequent rulers, except in the case of Richelieu.

The growing rigidity of ideas resulted in dogmatic theology, education, rules of etiquette, even dress. Life became an official pageant. A fixed standard of taste sought to confine even art and literature within prescribed limits. The same formality dominated religion. Bishops were princes of the Church, and often little else. Many fine sermons were preached, much penance was self-righteously performed; but gambling and adultery thrived none the less. To be intimate with the deadly sins, and at the same time exact in the performance of the outward duties of religion, was found to be practicable. But, in spite of this, the vital spark breaks out in the darkest and most cruel habitations. A study of this age reveals not only the abominable wickedness, but also the incredible goodness of which man is capable. The grace and beauty appertaining to the servant of God are nowhere more evident than in the seventeenth-century saint. Nor must it be forgotten that the seventeenth century produced the first Christian social reforms conducted on modern lines.

The golden age of outward show, which was in a certain measure the symbol of latent power, extended roughly from 1660 to 1683. But the existing administration was incompetent to deal with existing evils. Reckless extravagance, borrowing from the future to satisfy the needs of the present, all that is implied in the much-disputed saying: "*Après nous le déluge*," gave a fatal impetus to the monarchy on the downward road. Men like Colbert were only able to retard, not avert, the catastrophe. These are the words of Saint-Simon:—[When the supply of great men had ceased], "the machine of government coasted on for a considerable distance under pressure of their influence. But as soon as it slackened down, mistakes and enemies multiplied. Decadence rapidly set in, unperceived by the despot, whose



one instinct was to do and to direct everything himself, and who seemed to find consolation for foreign contempt in the sight of the panic occasioned by the fear of him at home." Thus under seeming official and theoretic order, chaos again undermined the social body. Three centuries of strife, disorder and vanity laid up a heavy reckoning. It was Louis XIV. who finally overdrew his account: but it was Louis XVI. who was obliged to face the creditors.

# SOCIAL LIFE IN FRANCE IN THE XVII CENTURY

## CHAPTER I

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF COURT LIFE FROM 1598 TO 1715

IT is to Falstaff, most human of men, that we owe the happiest wording of a sentiment as old as Adam and as wide as history. To "take mine ease in mine inn" is the ultimate though usually secret ambition of all ordinary persons. They wish to relax not only their tired muscles, but also those mysterious fetters known to pedagogues as the bands of discipline; to be, without let or hindrance, themselves. Those whom convention drives before her suffer grievous things even to-day. But harder still was the fate of seventeenth-century kings and queens, whose most unconscious actions were "subject to the breath of every fool"; those whom Racine, in the noontide glory of a splendid age, had the audacity to describe as "slaves." Slaves indeed they were, whether by vocation kings or courtiers, poets or solid statesmen of an honourable school. All were bound in that hardest of centuries by fetters originally self-imposed, now irretrievably welded into something more enduring than brass. The history of seventeenth-century society is a study in imperatives. It is one, moreover, particularly gratifying to persons who delight to see the punishment fit the crime. Never was there so admirable an object lesson on the relentless logic of the laws of consequence. Etiquette, once symbolic, became meaningless, and therefore absurd, without however appearing so to the French nation. A sense of humour, so potent in the French as individuals, was at that

period unaccountably lacking in them as a people. The ridiculous on a national scale failed to arrest their attention. All groaned beneath the tyranny of ceremony, but she passed so soon out of the sphere of things which may be laughed at into that of things to be taken respectfully for granted, that she reigned unmolested for two hundred years. It was not till the end of the eighteenth century that there arose a generation original enough to point the finger of scorn at her.

French etiquette after 1598 and before the Revolution naturally found its model in the Court. Before that period the life led by royal persons did not differ very materially from that of any other rich household. General principles of conduct were laid down, but details were left to chance and the royal whims at the moment. The King's person was sacred, and material contact with it was a species of sacrilege. This spirit lingered on till the dawn of the seventeenth century. A less simple and more calculating temper began to show itself on the accession of Henri of Navarre. It is a platitude to remark that shrewdness was the leading characteristic of this monarch. Apparent simplicity of intention and an engaging frankness of manner concealed a mind alive to every opportunity "of making a point." He desired pre-eminence—be it said to his honour that he desired it not selfishly as much as for the sake of national peace ; still, the fact remains that he was determined to be master in France. He also perceived that personal prestige, on which prestige of position most securely rests, is largely due to the impression made on eyes and ears as well as on susceptibilities. He did not believe that familiarity breeds contempt, but he realised that dignity and pageantry naturally appertain to the royal state, and are essential accessories to it. Even when most familiar with his subjects Henri remembered that he was what Shakespeare would have called "France." His personal tastes, on the other hand, led him to prefer a comfortable home-life, far from the irritating obligations of position. Hence the sensible compromise which was

effected by him. His domestic arrangements have been described as frankly "burgher." The King loved hunting, violent games of tennis, strolling in his gardens, tormenting his friends with jests at their expense, often broad but never stupid. From these pastimes he came in hungrily though not greedily disposed for food. Meals were partaken of with little ceremony. Dinner was nominally at 9.30 a.m., and supper at 5 p.m., but the Queen was often late, besides being sometimes very irritable. Conversation was inclined to drag. The principal dishes were placed before the King, and it was a polite attention on his part to send some of them to his wife. If it happened that she was out of temper, she was wont to refuse these dainties "for fear of poison." The King usually took no notice of her whims. Existence was to him the best of comedies, and he could derive much genuine pleasure from the smallest incidents. The servant who procured for him the fine melons that he loved was sure of a kind commendation. The Duc de Bellegrade might even carry his fooling to the point of throwing sweetmeats into the hair and ruffle of Marie de' Medici unreprieved. But these and like attentions were paid to Henri de Bourbon and his wife. The King and Queen of France, crowned and sceptred, were very different people. Henri as an individual knew people whom as a king he entirely ignored, and he never fell into the mistake which ruined Edward II. and Richard II.

It is curious that of the three kings who reigned in France during the seventeenth century, not one should have had a consort able to second him in the more spectacular part of his office. Marie de' Medici was perpetually conscious of the disadvantage under which she laboured as a mere duke's daughter and as a foreigner having neither wit nor more solid recommendations to esteem. Her only real confidant was her foster-sister Leonora Galigai. The playing of games of chance occupied most of her day. The time not given to cards or playing with her dogs was devoted by the Queen to somewhat perfunctory religious exercises. Her religion was sincere but entirely unintelligent. Her enamelled rosary



was in constant requisition, and her alms were as large as they were indiscriminate. Foreign missions, especially those to convert the Mohammedans, enjoyed her support. Of a large and cheerful "acceptance of the universe" she was incapable, but she faithfully performed her supposed royal and religious duties, such as the washing of the feet of thirteen poor women on Maundy Thursday. Her life was inert and pathetically joyless. Of her little son, the future Louis XIII., she was genuinely fond, and allowed him to play at soldiers round and under the great state bed in her principal living-room.

Here is a delightful letter written by the Dauphin to the King not very long before his assassination. The spelling is as interesting as the delicate hint to the effect that a present of a toy horse would be welcomed by the writer.

PAPA,—Depuy que vous ete pati, j'ay bien donné du paisi à maman. J'ay été a la guere dans sa chambe je sui allé reconete les enemy, il été tous a un tas en la ruele du li a maman ou j dormé. Je les ay bien éveillé ave mon tambour. J'ay été à vote asena papa, moncheu de Rong ma monté tou plein de belles ames, e tan tan de go canon, e puy j m'a donné de bonne confiture e ung beau peti canon d'agen, j ne me fau qu'un peti cheval pour le tire. Maman me revoie demain à Sain Germain où je pieray bien Dieu pou vou papa afin qu'il vou gade de tou dangé et qu'il me fasse bien sage, e la gache de vou pouvoi bien to faire les humbe seviles. J'ay for envie de dormi papa. Fe Fe Vendome vou dira le demeuran, et moy que je suj vote tes humbe e tes obeissan fi papa et seviteu.

DAUPHIN.\*

\* FATHER,—I have given mother a great deal of pleasure since you went away. I went to war in her room and to reconnoitre the enemy. They were all crowding together in the alcove of mother's bed in which I slept. You may be sure I roused them with my drum. Father, I have been to your arsenal, and M. de Rong shewed me the whole place full of beautiful weapons, and lots and lots of big guns, and then he gave me some very good jam and a pretty little silver cannon. Now all I want is a little horse to pull it. To-morrow mother is going to send me back to Saint Germain, where I will pray hard to God for you, father, so that He may keep you from all danger and make me a very good boy, and give me the happiness of soon being able to pay you my very humble respects. I'm very sleepy, father. Fifi Vendôme will tell you everything else, and I can but add that I am, father, your very humble and very obedient son and servant.

DAUPHIN.

The confusion resulting on the murder of Henri IV. was hardly favourable to the more intricate refinements of state etiquette. During the earlier part of the Regency small progress was made in this direction. The little King was compelled to recite speeches and to preside at great functions in his capacity of sovereign, and to suffer frequent whippings and the tyranny of lessons in his capacity of little boy. His education was haphazard, and the misfortunes of his early youth combined with his natural temperament to produce a gloomy and pessimistic character. His tastes for a king were curious.

"Il eut cent vertus de valet  
Et pas une vertu de maître,"

says an old song. Still, Louis XIII. cherished a very royal passion for his army, and had in truth a remarkable aptitude for military affairs. Given the necessary training, he would have proved himself a first-class general. The active duties of government having been removed from his control, first by his mother's favourites, then by the stronger hand of Richelieu, his energies became devoted to more trivial interests. On wet days he composed music, sang, carved wood, worked in iron and leather, and painted passably well. Occasionally he tried his royal hand at poaching eggs; at larding meat he was particularly clever. In fine weather he gardened. The green peas he grew were sold in the market, and to buy them was one of the most obvious ways of paying one's court to this very singular King. His hawks, however, occupied most of Louis' thoughts. Their maintenance cost the state 18,000 francs a year, and money was then between two or three times as valuable as at the present time. He loved his horses and dogs, but of human friends he had few, nor had he inherited the slightest trace of his father's easy gallantry. Mademoiselle de Hautefort, distinguished for her kind and pleasant manners and her purity in a Court which lacked any traditions of virtue in women, won his most sincere regard. But his love for this lady was platonic, and

in 1639 she vanished from his life altogether, owing to the dislike borne to her by Richelieu. The latter had hoped in vain to use her influence for political ends, and on her failing to play the part assigned to her, had attempted to oust her in favour of Mademoiselle de la Fayette, a more docile pupil. But the plan did not work, and Louis remained morose and unimpressionable. He was, on his own confession, bored to extinction. One of his frequent ejaculations was: "Mettons-nous à cette fenêtre, et puis ennuyons-nous, ennuyons-nous." Sometimes he would sit for hours in a corner and yawn, or, while Mademoiselle de Hautefort was still at Court, write down verbatim in his journal everything he had said to her, with her replies. Sometimes, again, he would call for his kitchen accounts and amuse himself by cutting off the milk-soup from the board allowed to one of his attendants. He rambled forlornly all about his palace seeking amusement, which he sometimes found in a highly original form. It is said that the fashion of wearing a little tuft of hair on the chin was originated by one of the King's freaks. It occurred to him that it would be amusing to shave all the officers of his household. To this process the victims were obliged to submit with as good a grace as possible. Richelieu alone escaped, thanks to the awe and majesty which hedged him round. A contemporary thus comments on the occurrence:—

"Hélas, ma pauvre barbe  
 Qui est-ce qui t'a faite ainsi?  
 C'est le grand roy Louis  
 Treizième de ce nom  
 Qui a toute esbarbé sa maison  
 Laissons la barbe en pointe  
 Au cousin de Richelieu  
 Car par la vertudieu!  
 Qui serait assez osé  
 Pour prétendre la luy raser?"

(*T. des Réaux*, II. 246.)

The King appeared little in public, partly owing to

great shyness and partly to an uneasy feeling that he was not entirely facing his responsibilities. "Le roi . . . fuyait le monde," says Tallemant, "et surtout Paris, parce qu'il avait honte de la calamité du peuple."

With so melancholy a leader it is not astonishing that Court-life under Louis XIII. was less gay though very much more splendid than in the pleasure-loving days of Henri IV. A great change was nevertheless taking place in the organisation of court society. Like Henri IV., Richelieu perceived that a magnificent order of life was a political weapon of no small importance; but, unlike Henri IV., he possessed the inclination as well as adequate means to set up such a life upon a permanent footing. General principles of etiquette were now crystallised and routine became a matter of obligation, binding on the King as much as on the courtier. Dinner was as of yore a tiresome business. "The King and Queen eat sadly. Madame de Richelieu has a chair; the other ladies, according to their rank, sit or stand. Those who have not dined, long to fall upon the dishes then and there; those who *have* dined feel sick and are suffocated by the smell of meat. So all of them suffer in one way or another."

The expenses of Court-life at this time were enormous. The King, the Queen and the Queen-Mother each had a separate household. That of Richelieu was hardly less splendid. The annual expenditure of the treasury was about 20,000,000 livres, and of that the King appropriated about 14,000,000. In 1620 or 1621 the King's plate cost him 98,400 livres a year; food for the household cost 370,000; 300,000 went in wages, and 214,000 livres were required for the maintenance of the horses and hawks. The pensions of royal favourites and others amounted to 6,400,000. One is glad to note the King's writing-master had 2000, and his nurse 6000 livres. Condé had 100,000, the Bishop of Paris 12,000, and the Chancellor 60,000. Also M. de Lorraine, who found himself unable to pay his debts, was again set on his feet by a gift of 100,000 livres.

Anne of Austria, who was, in spite of her faults, a very



great lady, was better fitted than her mother-in-law to preside at a Court as formal as that of France had now become. During her Regency the tyranny of etiquette became daily more formidable, and the two cardinals—Mazarin, from personal love of voluptuousness as well as perspicacity, Richelieu, more entirely from policy—united to make the yoke of discipline yet more grievous. The perfection of Court routine was also due to the character of the young King Louis XIV. He never forgot the troublous days of his childhood, when he was hurried by night from Paris to Saint-Germain and put to sleep in dreary half-furnished rooms, with the fear of the morrow ever before his eyes. The line of conduct he sketched out for himself, even in extreme youth, was therefore adhered to till his death. He was determined that the nobles should have their wings clipped, so that flights of ambition, such as those attempted during the Fronde, might for ever be impossible. He was equally determined that the bourgeoisie should not be lured to mischief by the temptation of idle hands. The first remedy for these ills was perfect centralisation of national life at Court. The nobles were encouraged to spend their time and substance under the King's eye, so that they were imperceptibly led to think that his favour was the only source of honour and wealth. His memory for faces enabled the King to observe the absence of the meanest courtier, and if a privilege was begged for one seldom at Court, the King was wont to reply icily—"That is a man whom I never see," or, "I don't know him." Indeed Louis proved himself so convincing a teacher, that to hold the King's bedroom candle while he got into bed became an office more coveted than the command of armies. To possess a room at Versailles—even if it was a public thoroughfare—was the end and aim of every courtier's schemes.

The bourgeoisie were kept contented by the employment of many of their number as state officials. The feckless younger sons of nobles were no longer permitted in every instance to work havoc as bishops and administrators, and most of the solid work of the century was done by men like Bossuet and

Colbert. This system had the advantage of providing a wholesome snub for those of the nobility who still desired active work. It ensured also a certain efficiency, since the persons thus employed knew that their position was entirely dependent on their honesty and capacity. Finally, it provided the entire bourgeoisie with a stimulus to conduct calculated to please its royal master. Gratitude, said one, is the anticipation of future favours. The possibility of being ennobled spurred on sober citizens (who would have much preferred to sit by their own firesides), to dance attendance on some noble in the hope of an eventual introduction to Court. M. Jourdain is the representative of a large and very active class of seventeenth-century martyrs to fashion.

The importance of royal patronage was also well impressed on artists and men of letters, on actors and shopkeepers, even on clowns and mountebanks. No fish was too small for the royal net to catch, and Louis possessed an astounding instinct as to the best methods of keeping this turbid mass of struggling creatures quiet under his hand. To begin with, the requirements of Court-life gave employment to an enormous number of persons of all ranks. The frequent opportunities for royal notice and advancement afforded by such service, besides the question of salary, ensured a constant supply of candidates. These persons hung about the Court on the chance of being able to snatch up an office vacant through death or disgrace before it was disposed of. Other offices were bought and sold. Some were even hereditary, and nobles did not disdain to have a post in the royal kitchen. After the middle of the reign, bourgeois mostly occupied these posts, not because the nobility had grown too proud, but because merchants alone were rich enough to buy them. The scramble for the higher places was sometimes nothing short of indecent. Should, for instance, the governor of a province die during the night while on a visit to Paris, the aspirant for his position was not ashamed to rush to Court before dawn, rouse a powerful friend, and persuade him to win over the King's valet

Bontemps. The latter would then pray the King on his waking to allow the candidate to be the first to speak to him at his *lever*. The request was then proffered before others had time to put in their claim, and thus great and responsible offices often fell to the lot of him who had the swiftest horse or knew best how to grease the chariot wheels of his ambition.

Louis himself submitted to the exigences of routine with extraordinary patience. As figure-head he played his part admirably. He was always punctual, exact in the performance of each detail of etiquette, and as distinguished in manner as in dress. He aimed at an outward perfection of conduct, because a King should be a mirror of all the graces. "He played billiards," observed Mademoiselle de Scudéry, "with the air of a master of the world." Though a person of strong passions, he was only known to lose his temper twice.\* He never passed the meanest washerwoman without raising his hat. Courtiers were required to dress sumptuously, but the King's clothes, after his first youth, were invariably sober and in excellent taste. His love for pageantry showed itself more markedly in his youthful love for set dancing and theatricals, and even though in later years these pastimes were exchanged for cards and billiards, he still liked to see others dance. Fine scenes, such as those arranged to impress foreign ambassadors, delighted him till the end of his life, and in these, of course, he himself played the chief part.

\* He also possessed a sense of humour and could laugh at a joke at his own expense. For instance, in 1664, he began to write verses, and among them was a madrigal with which he was not entirely satisfied. He showed it to the Maréchal de Grammont without admitting that he was the author, and asked him whether he had ever seen a more "impertinent" poem. Grammont at once exclaimed: "Sire, your Majesty judges divinely well in everything; it is certain that we here have the most stupid and ridiculous madrigal I have ever set eyes on." The King, beginning to laugh, continued thus: "And is it not true that the person who wrote it must be a great fool?" "Sire," replied the Maréchal, "it would be impossible to describe him otherwise." "Excellent," said the King, "I am delighted that you have spoken so plainly about it, because I am the author of it." "Ah, Sire, what treason!" cried the unhappy courtier. "I beseech your Majesty to give it back to me—I read it hastily." "No, M. le Maréchal," answered the King with great amusement, "first opinions are always the most sincere."



A graphic if not too lurid a picture of the King's personal characteristics is to be found in the pages of Saint-Simon. "The King," wrote that malicious courtier, "invariably spoke the truth, but always succeeded in conveying a misleading impression. He always had means to discover the secrets of others, though he never divulged the least of his own." Although easily moved to tears, he lacked real affection, and twenty-six hours after the death of Monsieur he was playing cards and trying over the prologue of an opera in Madame de Maintenon's room. This selfishness was largely due to his defective education, which had trained him to believe that kings are perfect by right of office and that all around them should not only obey with promptitude, but account themselves happy to have the privilege of doing so. Hence the revolting indifference displayed by Louis to the comfort of his servants. His mistresses especially suffered from this want of thought. Well or ill they were obliged to travel in a jolting, stuffy or draughty coach for entire days if the King were minded to take them to amuse him on his journeys. Even the Duchesse de Bourgogne nearly lost her own life as well as that of her child because the King, who enjoyed her society, was unwilling to take a short journey without her. It was inconceivable to Louis that people should not be thankful to expend life and fortune to gratify his whims. He sincerely thought himself to be the greatest of men. "Sire," said the Marquis de Verdes to him on his return to Court, "away from you one is not only unhappy: one becomes ridiculous." Statues of him in his glory still abound all over France, and the respect with which they were treated, says Choisy, rivalled that paid to the divinity of the Roman Emperors. The famous story of the Estates of Béarn is typical. This assembly having petitioned for leave to erect a statue to their countryman, Henri IV., Louis replied that a statue to himself would be more appropriate. The Estates obeyed, but in spirit gained their point, for under it they engraved—"To him who is the grandson of our great Henri."

With these views on his own almost godlike majesty, it is

not surprising to learn that the King positively liked people to lose their heads in his presence. A nervous manner and incoherent stammering in a neophyte ensured his goodwill. His own family trembled before him, and by the end of the reign all social and family bonds were broken in order that all classes and persons might be the more irretrievably tied to himself. "The greatest nobles were worn out and ruined by long years of public misfortune, and therefore docile from necessity. Their successors were separated, ever at variance one with another, the prey of ignorance, frivolity, pleasure-seeking and reckless extravagance. Even those whose intentions were least evil gave themselves up to fortune-hunting and thereby at once to servitude." Having deplored the degeneracy of the magisterial classes, Saint-Simon continues as follows: "No municipal or other body and finally hardly a single individual was found bold enough to formulate an original plan, still less to confide such a plan to anyone whatever. The climax was reached when near relations, even in great families, became strangers one to another . . . except in the matter of wearing mourning for even the most distant connections. All duties, in short, were absorbed into one dictated by necessity: namely to fear and to seek to please [the King]." The superstition which always accompanies ignorance in matters of religion led him to found his hope of salvation on external piety and an avoidance of the grave sins of the body; but consideration for others he never learnt, and even Madame de Maintenon confesses in her writings that persons honoured by royal notice must resign themselves to great suffering. The hands of those who keep the crown in place are more uneasy than the head that wears it.

The scenery provided by circumstances and the King for the pageant of his existence was admirably adapted to its *rôle* of background. His aversion for the Louvre, which reminded him of incidents he preferred to forget, caused Louis to live in the country as much as possible. He was also of opinion, said Saint-Simon, that distance lent enchant-

ment to his person. Soon after the death of his mother, Louis went to Saint-Germain, which was, however, not without its own unpleasant associations for the King. Thence he was in the habit of walking over to the village of Versailles, where Louise de la Vallière was staying. The neighbourhood having that and other attractions to offer, Louis became attached to the place; the great palace of Versailles was built, and the King migrated thither shortly before the death of Maria Theresa. The cost of this enormous white elephant was 500,000,000 francs of present money. "It was," says Saint-Simon, "an immense catafalque; one admires it, and then flees with all possible speed from the sight of it." The interior was certainly magnificent. Mr Farmer's excellent book on the subject provides a fine picture of the glory of the seventeenth-century Solomon. Here it is impossible to give more than the barest outline of the contents of some of the principal rooms. The floors were of marble, though later parqueterie was substituted in the upper stories, because the washing of the stones spoilt the ceilings below. The Salon d'Apollon was hung with the conventional crimson and gold, and used as a throne-room. The throne was of silver, with a canopy hung from rings in the ceiling (these are still there). Orange-trees in silver tubs stood between the windows, and flowers decked the tables by the walls. The room was hung with portraits by Vandyke, and the great Titians now in the Louvre. Orange-trees again figured in the Salon de Diane. Here the King played billiards with the Dukes of Vendôme and Grammont and the Maréchal de Villeroi, while the ladies of the Court sat in two brilliant rows and watched him. The great gallery was filled with silver tables and chairs dispersed over the beautiful carpets made at La Savonnerie. Four thousand wax candles lighted the room, and on each side of the seventeen windows were white damask curtains emblazoned with the arms of France in gold. "They each cost," says a complacent chronicler, "1050 livres." The upholstery was green and gold, and the general impression of all this splendour, reflected as it was



in the seventeen mirrors opposite the windows, was certainly calculated to impress foreign visitors.

In certain passages privileged shopkeepers were allowed to set up stalls and sell books, perfumes, etc., to the courtiers. The great courtyard was divided half-way down by a railing, beyond which none might drive who had not the "honour" of Versailles. Thence persons continued their transit to the palace itself in blue sedan-chairs, which might be hired for six sous. Soldiers and guards here abounded. At the gate was a company of five hundred guards, and the scarlet breeches and blue and silver coats of the King's bodyguard were constantly to be seen in the throng. The negro cymbal-player of the French Guards also frequently disported himself on this piece of ground.

The gardens of Versailles, laid out in formal terraces and walks, are the chief monument extant to the genius of Lenôtre. In the grounds was also a menagerie, which greatly amused the youthful Duchesse de Bourgogne, and a lake on which she and other ladies delighted to paddle about in little boats. This princess loved outdoor pastimes, and was the first royal owner of the little farm belonging to the neighbouring hunting-lodge at Trianon, later the toy of Marie Antoinette. "She herself milked the cows . . . and made butter, which was placed on the King's table. His Majesty thought it delicious, and every one had to taste it in order to pay his court." Trianon was regarded by Louis as a picnic-place, and after 1691 it became his habit to spend a night or two there at intervals. At all times it was a pleasant goal for a walk, and the gardens were kept in a perpetual state of readiness to meet the King's eye. The flowers of the formal parterres were changed daily, and the smell of the tuberoses was sometimes so strong that people could not stay in the garden.

Marly was, however, the only place in which the King could enjoy a holiday from the worst tyranny of etiquette. Hither people came by invitation only, whereas to Versailles all came who would. The privileged were even allowed to

be covered in the royal Presence, although at each walk the permission was renewed by the formula, "Your hats, gentlemen." The accommodation at Marly was small, and the Court was therefore also small. Of natural attractions the place had none. The site was damp, heavily-wooded, and depressing. Louis' infatuation for it is very singular. Towards the end of his life he was in the habit of spending two or three months there every year, and most of the domestic losses suffered by the old King are in some way associated with that gloomy spot.

The regulations affecting the King's household would be bewildering did we not possess an instructive explanation of each office and its duties by one Besonge. The date of this book is 1663, and in the preface is expressed the prevalent idea of the true nature of a King. "Sire," says the author, "when I contemplate your Majesty in the midst of all the great officers of your Crown and your royal household . . . I think I am witnessing the assembly of all the gods of antiquity on Mount Olympus, which the poet Homer so often describes to us. I consider you as Jupiter, father of gods and king of men, and when I think of the Goddess Juno, his spouse, I revere her as the type of our august Queen. . . . The Goddess Ceres, who abundantly supplies us with food, and all manner of fruit for the sustenance of men, may typify to us the *Grand Maître* and the butlers. As for the *Grand Chambellan* . . . and the masters of the wardrobe, I look upon them as the household gods placed in the inmost parts of the house. . . ." Much more in the same strain follows. Finally the author pulls himself up with the boast: "I could cite other similes appropriate to the remaining officers of your household, did I not fear to detain your Majesty's attention too long over this work." Having observed that the King in his own person united the qualities of nearly all divinities (*i.e.*, the graces of Venus, the valour of Mars, etc.), Besonge winds up thus: "We may say of your Majesty that having the soul of Cæsar and the fortune of Alexander, you possess



the appearance and the youth of Achilles." The author then states that even the spelling of his book is correct, and proceeds without further ado to enumerate the principal officers. The Grand Almoner was one of the highest of these. At that moment the office was held by a nephew of Pope Urban VIII. He was also the first peer of France. His stipend was 1200 livres, and his chief duty to receive the blessed bread from the Clerk of the Chapel Royal and to taste it before presenting it to His Majesty. The Grand Chambellan preceded the King's food with raised wand from the kitchen to the dining-room. The other *Maîtres d'hôtel* held theirs lowered. It was also the office of the Chambellan to present the King's napkin from the "nef" or "cadenas," a receptacle sometimes in the shape of a vessel, supported by sirens or lions, and made to contain the salt and silver plate, etc., to be used by the King.

The civil household comprised in all 4000 persons and 5000 horses. The *Maison Militaire* numbered 10,000 men. The youthful Dauphin also had a *Maison*. His chief governor was M. de Montausier, and his principal governess was Julie-Lucine d'Angennes de Rambouillet. This lady, as well as his nurse, Marguerite de Fleur, slept in his room, where a daily mass was celebrated for the infant's welfare.

But splendid as was the organisation of Court-life as seen from the outside, the minute regulations which ensured its harmonious working seem in themselves entirely ridiculous. Here are a few instances. The royal sword was carried by officials termed *portemanteaux* if the King were walking in his slippers or driving in a carriage drawn by not more than two horses. If, on the other hand, there were six horses, the sword was borne by squires. Only those persons who could prove their right to a certain number of quarterings before the Court genealogist might get into the King's coach. M. Rambaud observes that, according to this arrangement, Louis himself had no right to sit in his own coach, inasmuch as his grandfather married the heiress of a mere banker. Princesses having the right to sit on a footstool in the

presence of the Queen, might also drive into the courtyard of the Louvre, provided their coaches were covered with red or black velvet. If the Queen was fully dressed, her maids waited upon her at dinner; if she was in *négligé*, that duty fell to the waiting-women. But, in spite of these rules, Maria Theresa, nurtured from her infancy in an atmosphere of the most stringent etiquette, could never accommodate herself to what she considered the uncereemonious ways of her husband's Court. Kissing and *tutoyer* were forbidden in the presence of the King and the princes of the blood, and the proper mode of saluting the Queen and princesses was to kiss the hem of their dress. This custom was also followed in Spain, and therefore met with Maria Theresa's approval. But, unfortunately, she was herself required to salute the King's eldest brother and sister-in-law, whereas at home she owed this courtesy to no one except her father and mother. The fact that she wept on hearing of this indignity in store for her did not add to her popularity in the royal circle. She only cared for Spanish servants, Spanish customs and Spanish food. Her sole friend was a waiting-woman called La Molina, who had accompanied her from Spain, and whose duties included that of preparing Spanish dishes for her mistress' table. The French servants naturally did not take trouble over the cooking of the ordinary dishes for the Queen, as she never even tasted them. Instead of attributing their negligence to the real cause, Maria Theresa pretended to think that the French nation was stupid enough to despise her, and that every one else was preferred before her. The food she would not touch herself she did not like to see others eat. A curious and undefined jealousy caused her to exclaim at table: "I know they will eat up everything and will leave nothing for me." Her position was not improved by the fact that the King openly laughed at her, nor did the Grande Mademoiselle seek to conceal her youthful scorn. Mademoiselle ostentatiously avoided what she considered to be Spanish messes. The Queen would crossly ask: "Does nothing here suit your taste?" to which the

visitor would reply : " Madame, I happen to like *French* dishes," and the Queen would subside into inarticulate grumbling.

The routine of life was invariable. During the earlier part of the reign the Court migrated in the spring to Compiègne, in order to enjoy what it conceived to be an outdoor life of rural delights. In the autumn it went to Fontainebleau, fed the carp of sixteenth-century fame, and played the royal game of tennis. Stag-hunting at Versailles occupied the summer months. The winter was devoted to sledging and hunting in the daytime, and to music, card-playing, theatricals, and a dreary institution, known as the "appartement," in the evening. The life of a courtier was a fatiguing one. He was obliged to be present at the *lever* of the King and of the Dauphin or other prince of the blood; and as the latter were themselves usually present at the King's rising at 8 A.M., the courtier was obliged to leave his bed for the icy passages of Versailles at a very early hour. He then attended the King at Mass, at his dinner, his walk, his supper at ten, his going to bed at midnight, and whenever he changed his boots and coat, as well as at any entertainments which happened to be taking place. The ceremonies of the King's rising involved the attendance of 150 or 200 people. Long before eight o'clock the anteroom was filled with a whispering crowd, conning over the requests they meant to proffer. As the clock struck, the valet Bontemps entered the King's bedroom and pulled up the gold and white blinds. His own truckle-bed at the foot of the pen-like enclosure round the King's four-poster had been removed at an earlier hour. When the King was fully roused there filed in a brilliant assembly of princes of the blood. This was known as the *entrée familière*. A few moments later took place the *grande entrée*, i.e., the advent of the great lords. At this point the King got out of bed and sat on the edge of it, while his dressing-gown was hung over him and his slippers were put on his feet. The next batch of persons, consisting of nobles favoured with a brief conferring on them that honour, was then admitted. These



were closely followed by the captain of the guard and other officers. This entrance was termed *l'entrée de la chambre*. The King's shirt was now fetched, and water was brought to him to wash his hands and perhaps his face. The shirt was presented by the chief person present, and a like ceremony attended the putting on of the other garments. The King chose his cravat pin from a number presented to him on a tray. His wig was selected from a large collection under glass in a neighbouring closet. Every two days the King was shaved. Finally the doors were flung open and the rest of the waiting throng streamed in and lined the walls. The watchmaker then entered to wind up the royal watch, and the chaplain proceeded to rehearse a prayer, while the King knelt on his prayer-stool. When the assembly had gone to the King's Mass, the royal upholsterers (Molière's father was one of them)\* made the bed, and a valet sat all day inside the enclosure to guard it. All who passed were obliged to bow or curtsy to it, as they also did to the royal *nef*. Having breakfasted, the King worked for three hours with his ministers in his study.

Dinner was a particularly solemn event, and the ceremonies were so much protracted that the food was often spoilt thereby. Louis XIII. used to complain that he had never in his life tasted hot soup, and his son was not much more fortunate, though he had a fine new kitchen with thirty-two rooms and five hundred windows built by Mansard in 1685.† When the King dined in his anteroom, any person in respectable clothes was admitted to the sight. Louis sat in silence alone or with the Queen at the great state table. The people stared and the dinner grew cold while the preliminary ritual of the meal was in progress. The procession of dishes having left the kitchen, it crossed the road, mounted the great staircase, filed through several long rooms, and finally emerged into the Presence, preceded

\* In his case the appointment was an honorary one.

† Cf. "Princes seldom get their meat hot" (*Gulliver's Travels*, chap. iii., Voyage to Brobdingnag).

and flanked by guards. Every one who met the dinner was required to salute it by bowing. *M. le Maître d'Hôtel* then bowed to the royal *couvert* and presented the napkin, while each dish was tasted by its bearer, for fear of poison. Even the scented napkin, which was renewed at every course, was "tried." When the King wished to drink, a servant demanded in a loud voice, "A boire pour le roy." The wine was tasted by two persons and then brought to the King. A glass saucer was held under the goblet while he drank. It would be difficult to imagine anything more uncomfortable than this arrangement.

The King's appetite was enormous, but he never ate between meals, though he liked to see others do so. The Queen was constantly eating sweetmeats, and many a courtier was obliged to eat more, or more frequently than he desired, in order to please the King. On journeys in the King's coach, where escape was impossible, this obligation was particularly trying.

In the afternoon, having changed his coat and wig, the King went hunting, or, in later life, for a state walk in the grounds. The former exercise was a pageant rather than a sport. The ladies of the Court found in it a good opportunity of displaying their dresses. They also gleaned some amusement from observing the agonised struggles of courtiers whose ambition to shine was greater than their horsemanship. At Versailles the scene was the gayest, owing to the great profusion of flowers and the majesty of the solemn paths. The King walked or was in later days pushed in a chair round the great enclosure. A bareheaded group surrounded him. In youth he himself preferred to wear no hat, thus making it impossible for even his nearest relations to put on theirs. Once the Duc d'Orléans, who was afraid of neuralgia, went the length of putting his gloves on the top of his head as a hint that he hoped for leave to put on his hat. His brother detained him in conversation on general topics for a considerable time before he appeared to notice the unwonted position of the gloves. Then he



gave the desired permission. Subsequently the Duke had the pleasure of tormenting Mazarin in the same way by keeping him long standing without even a skull-cap on his Italian head in the chilly northern air.

In the evening followed more work, and after his marriage with Françoise Scarron, the King usually discussed affairs in her room from seven to eight o'clock with one of his ministers. His wife did embroidery in an armchair, protected from the draught by a screen-like structure covered with red damask. It had always been the King's wish to continue the *cercle* or reception that his mother had introduced. But the Queen had lacked the necessary social gifts, the Dauphine's health was too bad, and her son's wife, the Duchesse de Bourgogne, was but a child. In 1704 the latter was thought old enough to dine alone in state on Tuesdays, when ambassadors were received, and to hold a reception afterwards. But the custom fell into disuse, as the Duchesse, delightful young person though she was, had not sufficient experience to entertain so large a number of people. After 1692 there was held on three days in the week an "appartement," which began at seven, was honoured with the King's presence at eight, and continued until ten, when His Majesty supped. Music, card-playing and billiards occupied the evening. Saint-Simon notes, as a special concession, that a man might play with whom he liked. Conversation was prohibited, even when the King was absent. Trouvain's engravings of 1694 represent a dreary room full of persons sitting stiffly round the walls. The ladies wear low dresses and carry muffs. Their hair, which is piled up high, is adorned with stiff bows. All look unspeakably fatigued.

On the other three week-days there was usually a theatrical performance. Ballets, in which the King, in his youth, took a prominent part, were also danced before the Court. Molière was the author of some of these charming half-spectacular, half-musical performances, and it is to him we owe the information that at the ballets of 1668, Portuguese

oranges were handed round with the playbills. But growing rigidity ended by banishing the ballet, and after Benserade's *Triumphe de l'Amour*, danced in 1682, no more such performances came to enliven the gloom into which the Court was rapidly sinking. Balls and masquerades were very frequent in the more splendid period of the reign, and even as late as 1706, when he did not feel equal to the effort of playing a part, Louis so far entered into the spirit of the entertainment as to wear "a gauze dress over his ordinary coat." But so fatiguing was the life of a courtier that by the evening he was unable to enjoy anything. Saint-Simon mentions a ball continued till 8 A.M., and the weary Duke, admitting that he had not seen daylight for three weeks, further confesses his unfeigned joy when Ash Wednesday came to put an end to the series of doubtful pleasures. The King had an idea that his duty to himself and others compelled him to continue entertainments which he himself secretly hated. Madame de Sévigné observes in 1674:—

"The balls of Saint-Germain are of a deadly sadness. The little children, from ten o'clock onwards, long to go to sleep, and the King has only the kindness [to give these balls] to mark the carnival. He says at dinner: 'When I do not provide amusement, people complain; and when I do, the ladies stay away.'"

The reception of ambassadors afforded the King and Court a fine opportunity of displaying their magnificence. The most famous reception recorded is that of the false embassy from Persia in 1715. This extraordinary hoax was organised by the minister Pontchartrain. The old King had lost interest in life; he felt that the prestige of France had declined, and knew in his heart that his own sun was setting. He was beginning to drop out of European society. It was therefore imagined that if a mock embassy from some Eastern potentate could be palmed off as genuine, Louis would again begin to think himself another Solomon, whose fame had penetrated to the uttermost parts of the earth, and would thus be comforted. Pontchartrain skilfully carried out

this daring project. The embassy was announced at a suitable time before its arrival. A splendid throne was prepared for the poor old King, who sat thereon, bowed down by the weight of his gold and black robes and the crown diamonds of France. His son and grandson being dead, the heir-apparent, the baby Louis XV., was held in leading-strings on the steps of the throne. The painter Coypel was present, in order to gather material for a picture in commemoration of the scene. The false ambassadors presented a letter purporting to be from their master, talked a language known only to themselves, and which an interpreter feigned to translate, presented costly gifts, and retired with others. These of course, never reached their destination. Fortunately for himself, Louis died before he had time to grow suspicious. The episode had cheered him and Pontchartrain was satisfied.

It will be seen from these notes that the post of neither King nor courtier was a sinecure, but it was the latter on whom chiefly fell the burden of exaggerated pomp. The pleasures of the eye and the pride of life delighted him at every turn. He was a splendid apparition whom the street-boys gaped at and the bourgeois envied. That, however, did not prevent his heart as well as his feet from aching almost unceasingly. He was often short of money. He was compelled to dress like a prince, while he knew that his estates were going to ruin for lack of care, and that his capital was exhausted by extravagance necessary to maintain his position. Often he neither thought nor cared what the end would be; often, too, the King was known to help a needy servant by paying his gambling debts, giving an appointment at Court to his brother, or an abbey to his daughter. But to thus succeed at Court, certain talents were required: and those who were without family, ability, or personal push often dropped out of the gay life ruined men. Often, too, men suffered arbitrary imprisonment for vague or totally unspecified charges, and many a poor wretch spent a lifetime in a fortress without precisely knowing



the nature of his crime. When the prisons were opened on the death of Louis XIV., a man was discovered in the Bastille who had never even been through the preliminary form of interrogation, although arrested thirty-five years before. No one could remember what was the charge against him, nor could any documents relating to it be discovered. The governor therefore offered him a handsome apology and proposed to set him at liberty that very day. "Of what good is liberty to me?" replied the unfortunate man, "I am an Italian, I do not know Paris—my wife I left behind in Italy." What was he in truth to do in a strange country without friends? He ended by living on in the prison as before except that he now went out when he liked.

Moreover, those courtiers who were not strong were soon worn out. The great rooms at Versailles contained not a single chair for the common herd, and even princesses had to be content with stools. At Fontainebleau a few ladies took to sitting on the floor. In the anterooms there were certainly boxes and benches without backs for the use of persons waiting for audiences, etc., but these were of little use, as royal persons were constantly passing through, and most of the day was spent in the royal Presence. The following advice to courtiers was therefore remarkably sound: "You have only three things to remember: speak well of every one; ask for every post that is going; and sit down when you get the chance." The tax on the brain involved by the necessity of being ever on the alert, ever ready to pay appropriate compliments, and to conceal personal feeling in a tangle of words, was also very wearing. Madame de Sévigné thus describes the sufferings of the King's historiographers to her cousin Bussy-Rabutin:—

"March 18, 1678.—The King's historiographers (Racine was one of them), are following the army. They are not used to fatigue. I am told they are greatly surprised to find themselves on foot, on horseback, in mud up to their ears. They now know from experience how little real

pleasure is to be derived from sleeping in the rays of the beautiful mistress of Endymion. They are paying their court by showing astonishment at the numerous legions which compose the King's formidable army."

On a previous occasion the King expressed his regret that Racine and Boileau had not followed him to the war. Racine immediately replied: "Sire, we only had clothes suitable for town wear, and so we ordered country suits, but the places your Majesty was attacking were taken before our clothes could be finished." \*

The King himself was not immune from ills to which less exalted flesh was then particularly heir. The icy chill that was struck to one's very bones by the marble splendour of the palace passages gripped him as much as others. The Princess Palatine asserts that even in 1695—not so cold a winter as 1709—the wine and water on the royal table froze; and the disposition of the fireplaces at Versailles to this day testify to the lack of adequate heating arrangements. Further, in a society in which people who took baths were thought either ill or eccentric, the consequences of a lack of cleanliness were acutely felt. Then, apparently effectual as was the police organisation of the Court, strange episodes, which the royal servants either could or would not investigate, from time to time startled the King's equanimity. In January 1674 six candlesticks more than five feet high, and some silver lamps worth 7000 francs, were stolen from the chapel of Saint-Germain; and Saint-Simon relates the disappearance of the gold fringes of the curtains in the room between the chapel and the gallery at Versailles. Bontemps, who was responsible, searched for them in vain. A few days later, while the King was sitting at supper in a room crowded with people, an enormous parcel shot through the air from

\* There were many ways in which an astute courtier might flatter the King. The latter once sent a letter to the Duc de Montbazou by the hand of a footman. The Duke received the letter with the utmost respect, kept the footman to dinner, and treated him as his principal guest. "That," exclaimed Louis, on hearing of the occurrence, "is to know how to behave like a gentleman." ("Cela s'appelle savoir vivre.")



behind his chair, and landed with a crash on the middle of the table. No one knew whose was the mighty arm which had hurled it. Inside were the lost fringes, and on a piece of paper the words: "Bontemps, reprends tes franges, la peine en passe le plaisir." The King was thus never permitted to forget entirely that there were persons who did not fear to ridicule him, and as he grew older he also began to perceive that awe does not always breed love: that his family dreaded his tyranny: and that his will would, after his death, be put aside with contempt, as an invalid document which no one need regard. All was passing, all changing. The French nation itself was beginning to feel with "Everyman," "How transitory we be all day." The moral state of France suggests the sordid confusion of a room in which a revel has been held the night before; where dim light struggles in at the half-opened shutter, chairs lie overturned, fragile glasses broken, wine in purple streams stains the crumpled tablecloth. All conveys a general impression of cynicism, unrestraint and utter weariness. He who knows Dürer's "Melancholia" in her ruined world, or Watts' tremendous picture of the dead man amidst his earthly toys, proclaiming the lesson, "Sic transit gloria mundi", also knows how dreary was the setting of *Le Roi Soleil*.

## CHAPTER II

### MEN AND MANNERS AT COURT

**I**N the preceding chapter some attempt was made to reconstruct the ponderous framework which kept seventeenth-century Court-life together. But since persons are more interesting than precepts, it is with relief that one turns from these dry bones to the vital spirit which animated and gave them meaning. Thanks to the letter-writing and diary-keeping habits of the age, it is possible to become personally acquainted with men and women who knew how to twist their contemporaries round their little fingers. Their ambitions and personal cravings for political pre-eminence or a new head-dress have come down to us hot and palpitating. We know all about their grievances, the snubs they inflicted and received, their fear of God and dread of sorcerers, their childish passions and their readiness to scratch each other's faces, as well as their ripe comprehension of the meaning of life and its hard necessities. Madame de Sévigné hands herself down to posterity far more than the persons and things she describes. To know the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon, most snobbish and sensible of seventeenth-century peers, is to have lived in the spirit at Versailles, and to have gossiped with every newcomer on the Paris road. Above all, to follow the vagaries of Gaston's daughter the Grande Mademoiselle, is to breathe the very air of the wind-swept Fronde, before one emerges into the perfumed atmosphere of decades when La Vallière waned before Montespan and a quondam governess triumphed over both.

The adventures of Mademoiselle, as well as her delightful pleasure in merely being alive were of course peculiar to herself; but the furniture of her house of life and the jostling

crowd of characters through which she worked her imperious way, were common to the experience of other royal ladies. She lived, moreover, through the most momentous scenes of that great century, and was "hail fellow well met" with all the actors great and small. Modern enquirers into their habits, especially persons who enjoy the mere spectacle of men living and moving, could hardly find a guide more competent to pioneer them through the age than this princess. The chief impression one gains from a perusal of her *Mémoires* is, that she was a person who knew how to be happy. She had many faults, among which a perfectly sublime arrogance was not the least. The knowledge that she was the King's first cousin never seems to have left her mind. She was always standing upon her dignity, and detailed recitals of absurd disputes over precedence constantly occur in her writings. She was often cruel, as when she offered to hang a number of her own soldiers at Orléans simply in order to maintain friendly relations with the authorities. Her cruelty on lesser occasions appeared in the delight with which she showed up and ridiculed the folly of less brilliant people. It appeared also in the biting repartee which disconcerted the foolish little Queen, and in the practical jokes which were so bewildering to persons with a less spirited sense of humour. In her very childish vanity there is, however, something attractive. One cannot but feel drawn towards a woman so simple and direct that she neither can nor will take the trouble to appear other than she is. Herein lies the strong attraction of la Grande Mademoiselle. She was human through and through. In the midst of a cautious and artificial age, she was daring, unaffected, and entirely original. Never was there a less ungenerous mind than hers. Shallow and even silly she may have been, but she was ever conscious of the moral obligations of position and, in a lesser degree, of wealth. Her selfishness was largely unconscious, and the result of the ideas of her own importance fostered by the traditions of her sphere. She had the energy to make some personal enquiry into the management of her

estates, and to form independent judgments on persons, things and events. She flung herself body and soul into the cause she elected to support. She was, it must be confessed, of a startling rashness, and swept like a whirlwind over the country, but then so did all her contemporaries who possessed the active temperament, with this difference: they strove for personal ends, she from conviction. That she incidentally enjoyed herself *en route* has nothing whatever to do with the main charge against her. With the ethics of the matter we are not concerned any more than with the political results of her actions. It is her social aspect that is alone of importance here, and the voice of the fault-finder carping at that, will to the end of time be drowned by the sympathetic laughter she has ever been able to provoke by her own.

One dull November at Champigny, Mademoiselle found amusement in making her ladies write perfectly sincere descriptions of themselves. She herself joined in the game, and the description she left may well serve as her introduction to us to-day. "I am tall, neither fat nor thin. My figure is very fine and graceful. I have a pleasing appearance. My neck is fairly well-shaped; my arms and hands are not pretty, but the skin of them, as well as of my neck, is beautiful. My legs are straight and my feet well-shaped; my hair is fair, and of a beautiful silvery tone. My face is long, and the curves of it are beautiful. My nose is big and aquiline, my mouth neither large nor small, but curved very attractively; my lips are red, my teeth not beautiful though they are certainly not repulsive. My eyes are blue, medium-sized, brilliant, gentle and proud as is my whole appearance. I have a haughty though not a conceited expression. About my dress I am very careless, though not untidy or dirty. I hate dirt. . . Everything I put on is in good taste. Carelessness in dress is less unbecoming to me than to other women, for, without flattering myself, I detract from the appearance of my clothes less than my clothes add to my appearance. . . I am a bad enemy because I have a hot and violent temper; and that, in a person of



my birth, may well make my enemies tremble. But then I have a noble and compassionate mind. I am bored by nothing, though everything does not amuse me. No one ever had so much self-control as I, and never has soul been so much master of body as mine: this, I must admit, sometimes causes me to suffer."

Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Duchesse de Montpensier, was born at the Louvre in 1627, the year after her father, Gaston, brother of Louis XIII., had been detected in one of his numerous plots. Her mother, from whom she inherited most of the great wealth which made her the richest princess in Europe, died a few days afterwards. Mademoiselle's\* education was confided to the Marquise de Saint-Georges, who was snob enough to spoil the little great lady shamefully. The latter lost no time in determining that she was born to rule. At the age of seven she sang songs against her father, because it was rumoured that he was about to make his peace with the Court by marrying Richelieu's niece. The report turned out to be a false one, so that Mademoiselle could continue to play with her toys with a mind at rest.

In 1636 and 1637 Anne-Marie-Louise was at Blois and Chambord with her father. Her chief occupation at this time was playing battledore and shuttlecock, because "movement is what I like better than anything else." Thence she went to the Abbey of Fontevault, where the abbess, Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon, daughter of Henri IV. and Charlotte des Essarts, did all she could to entertain her. But the spoilt child refused to be amused until she heard that there was a mad woman on the premises. The sight of this poor creature roused her a little, but the food, said she, was bad, and her stay at the abbey would have been shorter than it was, had she not cherished the hope of seeing another lunatic described to her by her women. Meanwhile she ordered her own cook to prepare meals outside the abbey and bring them in at the proper hours. The second lunatic was displayed,

\* Mademoiselle was the title of the King's niece.



and Mademoiselle again deigned to be diverted. Many years after she was still able to write: "I like mad people, whether hilarious or melancholy." But in the end the afflicted couple began to pall on her, and Mademoiselle returned by slow stages to her winter quarters in Paris. She often went to Court to play with the King and the Duc d'Anjou, and she was there when Henrietta Maria came to take refuge with her French relations. The English Queen was ill, besides being short of funds. She had brought a large train of ladies and carriages with her, and was thus able at the beginning of her exile to live as became her position. But Charles could not send her money, and her expenses had soon to be cut down. The poor lady was also pathetically given to reminiscences. "Henrietta Maria," says Mademoiselle, "continued to take pleasure in exaggerating her past prosperity, the comfort of her life in England, the beauty and fertility of the country, and the amusements she there enjoyed. She also laid special stress on the good qualities of her son the Prince of Wales."

These praises paved the way for the arrival of the latter two years later. "He was fairly tall for his age (between sixteen or seventeen), with a fine head, black hair, and a dark complexion, and was on the whole a pleasing person to look at." That he was English in his tastes became at once evident to Mademoiselle. "He ate no ortolans, and threw himself upon a piece of beef and a shoulder of mutton as if there were absolutely nothing else to eat." He could not speak French, but managed nevertheless to make it evident that he admired the King's lively cousin. The moment has now come to speak of one of the chief peculiarities of this young person. She had but one serious object in life, and that was to make a brilliant marriage. She made no attempt to conceal this desire, nor had she any reluctance in admitting the fact that in choosing a husband the desirability of his position rather than of his person would weigh with her. "I always had a great aversion for love," wrote Mademoiselle many years later,

“even when it is lawful, because this passion always seemed to me entirely unworthy of a noble mind.” While still a child she dreamed of marrying the Dauphin, whom with that aim in view she called her little husband. Richelieu having nipped these aspirations in the bud, she looked round for other possible alliances. The Spanish Cardinal Infant, Governor of the Low Countries, might have procured a dispensation to marry ; but then, on the other hand, Mademoiselle “looked higher.” Philip IV. of Spain attracted her until he married some one else. Had the next man selected for candidature been successful, poor Catherine of Braganza would have been spared her long martyrdom in this country, and the social life at Charles II.’s Court would have been very different ; for in 1646 Mademoiselle began to entertain ideas of becoming Queen of England. She was, however, too prudent a woman to commit herself to an important course of action without first making, like Mr Toots, “a calm reviewal of all the circumstances.” There was much to be said against the match. The chief objection was that Mazarin desired it, which in itself constituted a reason against it in the mind of this perverse princess. The cardinal hoped thereby to bind Charles by yet one more strand to perpetual alliance with France. While he remained Charles Lack-land this could do no harm, and if he recovered his patrimony, association with England might prove very useful in the event of a long-continued European war. But Mademoiselle was not patriotic enough to sacrifice herself on the altar of her country on the chance of one day being able to call herself Queen. Her desire was to hold out to Charles the hope of her great fortune, so as to prevent his forming a connection with any other princess, but at the same time to avoid pledging herself to anything definite until it became evident which way the wind blew in England. For Charles himself her feelings were very tepid. She was older than he, and a more capable though a less clever person. Nor did the prospect of life in what was considered a rather dowdy Court attract Mademoiselle, who had a

wholesome love for the magnificent. She was well aware that Charles had no personal affection for her, and that although Henrietta Maria was kindly disposed and would welcome her as a daughter-in-law on her own merits, the primary consideration in the minds of both mother and son was the pecuniary one. Charles literally had not a penny. He could not hope to regain his kingdom without soldiers and money to pay them; that done, he would still be in need of a vast fortune to repair the havoc of the last few years.

Matters had reached this point when an event took place which all but drove Mademoiselle to accept Charles out of pique. In 1645 Ladislas IV., King of Poland, sent ambassadors to ask the hand of Marie de Gonzague, daughter of the Duc de Nevers, who afterwards became Duke of Mantua. The marriage took place by proxy in Paris the year after, and the bride enjoyed all the honours of a Queen before starting for her husband's country. She, a mere duke's daughter, now sat in an arm-chair, while the royal princesses of France sat miserably perched on small stools. This was just the kind of indignity that Mademoiselle was unable to brook. She did not go to the wedding, nor did she join the Queen's circle after dinner, "because," she said, "I should have hated to have only a footstool before this one-day Queen, whom I had always seen in a lower place than myself; I own, though, that I was perhaps exaggerating the situation, as even the Queen (of France) took a seat below her."

It was therefore with a feeling of pleasure that she beheld the growing attentions of Charles who, if he returned to his own, would be a far greater King than Lanislas could ever be. She records in an offhand manner, yet with lurking satisfaction, that the Prince of Wales made a point of escorting her to her carriage and never putting on his hat until she drove away. Allusions to him now grow more frequent in the *Mémoires*. The next one occurs in connection with a ball given by Madame de Choisy. The Queen



of England expressed a wish to dress her niece for it, and came with that intention to her lodgings with her son. Mademoiselle's hair was then done while Charles held the candle. The latter, who as yet possessed but a slight acquaintance with the French language, had sought to express in his costume what his tongue was unable to put into words. "He wore," writes his cousin, "trimmings of scarlet, white and black, because the setting of the jewels I was wearing was tied on with ribbons of those colours; I also had a feather of the same colours, and everything was as the Queen of England had commanded."

Charles, however, soon became "an object of pity." This coldness arose from the fact that the princess no longer thought the position he had to offer worth consideration. The Emperor alone could now satisfy the pretensions of Gaston's daughter. This change of mood was regretfully observed by Henrietta Maria, but she knew that neither exhortations to her son to show more enthusiasm nor a more active campaign against Mademoiselle would in anything forward her object. She therefore wisely let the matter rest, while her niece lay awake at night planning how best she might advance to the conquest of the empire. Having ascertained that the Emperor was a devout man, Mademoiselle did her best to acquire the same habits of mind. She so far persuaded herself that she was really being "converted," that for the space of one whole week she wished to become a Carmelite nun. This resolve she prudently kept to herself, though her servants noticed that she neither ate nor slept. She records that she felt great vanity because she was about to abandon the position of Empress for the religious life, and even went the length of weeping at the thought of the number of persons who would grieve at losing her from among them. Towards the end of this momentous week she went to tell her father of her irrevocable decision. Gaston was playing cards on her arrival, and Mademoiselle felt that the moment was not favourable for serious talk. When he called the next day she was at Mass, and the avowal was

again put off. Finally she sprang the bomb on him one evening, and Gaston was roused by it to unwonted energy and annoyance. "His first thought was," says his daughter, "that Madame de Brienne and other bigoted women had put that into my head." Mademoiselle, who hardly knew what she herself wished or expected, was alarmed at the prospect of facing the objections of the entire family, which she feared, in spite of all her protestations to the contrary. She begged her father to divulge her request to no one, and in three days she had forgotten all about it herself. Her late devotion had, however, some germs of sincerity in it, and could not be cast off wholesale at a moment's notice, especially as visions of the empire now grew brighter again. The form of her piety may be seen in the following passage: "I did not go out driving, and I did not even wear patches or powder my hair. The lack of attention I paid to the latter allowed it to grow so long and untidy that it formed quite a disguise. I wore three kerchiefs round my neck, which half stifled me in summer, and I had not a single coloured ribbon, as if I wanted to look like a person of forty. My only pleasures were reading the life of Saint-Theresa, and speaking or hearing others speak of Germany. I had effected so great a reform in my manner of life and dress that you cannot wonder that I did not keep it up long." Her conversation was also, as she thought, edifying, and when a man lately returned from the front came to see her, she regaled him with a sermon on preparedness for death. "The man," says she, "was greatly astonished."

It is a pity that after so complete a study for the part of Empress, Mademoiselle should not have had the pleasure of acting it in real life. In 1648 came the bitter moment when Mazarin, who had encouraged her pretensions, let it become only too plainly apparent that he did not take the matter seriously, and that Mademoiselle had not—indeed never had—the faintest prospect of marrying Ferdinand III. "My resentment was all the harder to suffer," writes the victim of



the deception, "inasmuch as I had not the means of making it felt." But anger did not prevent her from shortly afterwards entering upon an intrigue with one Saugeon to scheme a marriage between herself and the Emperor's brother. But in taking this step Mademoiselle had gone further than her family was prepared to allow. Mademoiselle was arraigned for her crime of independence before a solemn committee, consisting of the Regent, Gaston and Richelieu. She was never at a loss for an answer, and the committee, whose only aim had been to give her a wholesome fright, did not proceed further with the enquiry. A temporary rustication was enjoined upon her, and Mademoiselle hunted and boated at will in the neighbourhood of Pons.

Her return to Paris took place just before the outbreak of the Fronde. Confusion reigned, and the mob knew not whom to obey. Mademoiselle was now in her element. She scented the battle from afar, like the thoroughbred that she was, and threw herself into the contest as keenly as any boy. Among the lower classes she was very popular, and the chains stretched across the streets on the *Journée des barricades* were lowered by the Pont-Neuf to let her pass. This mark of deference elated the princess, and she daily identified herself more and more with the people in her hatred for Mazarin. It was with a malicious delight that she welcomed the *coup de théâtre* of the Queen's flight on 6th January 1649. "I was," said she, "quite overcome with joy at seeing that they were about to make a mistake, as well as at the prospect of witnessing the misery it would cause them to suffer; it was a kind of revenge for the persecutions I had endured; still," adds the discerning princess, "in taking this kind of revenge one often visits vengeance on oneself." Mademoiselle was nominally identified with the Court, and therefore fled with them in the chilly dawn. The start was made at 4 A.M. "The Queen was in high spirits; indeed she could not have been more so if she had succeeded in hanging every one she disliked." The palace at Saint-Germain was entirely unprepared to receive guests. Most of the rooms

were dismantled, and it was useless to hope to procure provisions from the hostile capital. Mademoiselle, as usual, made the best of the situation. She was also not entirely without necessities. Madame lent her two waiting-women, and a mattress and a bundle of linen were sent after her. Her chemise, she says, was washed while she lay in bed. The first night did not furnish her with pleasing remembrances. Her mattress was placed on the floor of a room with no fire and no glass in the windows. The fact that the walls and ceiling were frescoed added to, rather than diminished, the general feeling of discomfort. The great painted figures looming out of the twilight terrified Mademoiselle's little half-sister, who shared the mattress with her. Mademoiselle sang in the hope of sending her to sleep; but the child woke constantly, and her sister was every moment called upon to scout the idea of bogies and to begin the lullabies afresh. "This fatigue," says Mademoiselle, sensibly, "cured me of all other ailments."

The food was bad, and every one suffered as much "misery" as Mademoiselle could wish. Some people had beds, but lacked the heavy curtains in which the seventeenth century loved to enshroud itself while asleep; others, having every facility for being stifled, were compelled to lie abed more than they wished, because they had no clothes in which to appear in public, and not enough fuel to warm their own rooms. Mademoiselle triumphed. Her popularity among the Parisians had gained for her a passport for provisions and household effects, so that she now found herself in the agreeable position of being able to patronise the Queen, by sending for her things at the same time as her own. The messenger was a boy of fourteen or fifteen, afraid of no one, and thoroughly alive to the humours of the situation. He described his journey to the King and Queen without the least nervousness, and at the other end he stated the object of his mission with equal aplomb before the Parliament of Paris. He brought away among other things a box of highly-scented Spanish gloves, and it was with great joy that he

described the sneezing-fits they produced among the clerks who inspected all goods sent out from the capital. A little diversion was caused by the arrival of the Duke of York in France. He was about thirteen, "very handsome, well proportioned, and with a pretty face: his hair was fair and he spoke French well." Otherwise there was little incident in the life at Saint-Germain until the chief rebels came to salute the King and Queen after the signing of the Peace on 11th March. Retz, the Bishop-Coadjutor of Paris, alone stayed away.

Now there began again the gay old life at the Tuileries, while famine and want were crushing the life out of the lower classes.

In the summer the Court took a tiresome journey to Libourne, where Anne of Austria lay undressed on her bed all day on account of the heat, and Mademoiselle raged in silence at the enforced inaction. "I spent all my time," she writes, "in watching the boats arrive from my window, and when I was with the Queen I spent the whole day in doing tapestry work. Although the weather was glorious, the Queen would not go for walks, and I was greatly disgusted at never stirring out of her room."

The next year, 1651, provided enough excitement to please the most romantic. On 7th February Mademoiselle was just going to bed when she heard an uproar outside. She rushed to the terrace and saw a barrier by the river held by horsemen who wished to aid the escape of Mazarin, whom the capital had now become too hot to hold. Seeing this, Mademoiselle's valets and the musicians of her orchestra dashed out to rout the enemy. The King had meanwhile been surrounded in his palace, so that the Queen might not again escape with him. While the panic lasted, Gaston sent up one de Souches every night with orders to see Louis in bed, so that all reports of flight might be officially contradicted. The princes were set free on the 13th, and on their triumphal return on the 16th, Mademoiselle began to lose her dislike for Condé. She was perhaps a little glad to witness the annoyance of the Queen,



who resented the crowding of her rooms by people come to see Condé's apotheosis. In any case we learn that Mademoiselle, having entered into an amiable conversation with the prince, frankly told him how glad she had been at his imprisonment: he in his turn revealed what pleasure he had derived from the thought that she had been a victim to small-pox. No sooner was the reconciliation made than the possibility of marrying him presented itself to Mademoiselle. It is true that he already had a wife, but she was ill and might die. All hope of being Empress was now at an end; a Mantuan princess had been proposed to Ferdinand as a wife, and Mademoiselle, turning a brave face on the world, remarked: "God, Who is just, did not purpose to give a woman like me to a man who was not worthy of me."

Mademoiselle's hopes of becoming Queen of England were now for a moment revived, only to flicker out and die, extinguished by her own hand. She had been annoyed with Charles during his last visit, because he sat for a quarter of an hour after dinner without opening his lips. He returned to France after the battle of Worcester with diminished fortune and improved manners. Mademoiselle, who was suffering from a swollen face, went to call on him with her hair all hanging about her eyes. The first thing she noticed was that his was short and that he had grown a beard. Charles was glad to see her and escorted her back to the Tuileries as of yore. He amused her with stories about the historic oak-tree, and his Scottish experiences. Mademoiselle especially laughed at a tale about a woman who thought it immoral to hear the violin. Charles was "a timorous lover," although he now expressed himself so well in French that the princess was compelled to write: "Every one must agree that Love is French rather than of any other nationality." At this juncture Henrietta Maria thought the moment had come to bring matters to a climax. She therefore boldly asked her niece whether she would marry her son, adding that under happier circumstances she would, of course, have only consulted Gaston, but that as things were, she thought that Mademoi-

selles herself ought to be first consulted. A week was to elapse before a definite answer was given. Meanwhile Mademoiselle told Charles that if she saw her way to accepting him, he must return to England directly after their marriage. "I should be grieved," said she, "to see you here dancing triolets and amusing yourself, while you ought to be in a place where you could compel people either to break your head or else put back the crown on it. I added that he would be unworthy to wear the crown if he did not go to win it at the point of the sword and at the risk of his life." But Mademoiselle must have known that she could never be the wife of a penniless prince, and on hearing that Lord Germain had publicly said: "We shall curtail his allowance and sell his lands," she told Henrietta Maria that she would not marry Charles II. An embassy from Cromwell was received soon after this event, and Charles was asked to leave the Court. Thus waned the star of that ill-fated prince. Mademoiselle, however, paid a tribute to the past by absenting herself whenever Cromwell's ambassadors were expected in Paris.

There next occurred one of the most exciting episodes in Mademoiselle's career. Mazarin had returned from exile in December 1657, and the Fronde was at its height. Orleans, so often a bone of contention, had refused to declare for either King or princes, and Gaston was asked by the latter to go and gain it for them. He preferred to send his daughter, and thereby furnished French history with one of its most curious incidents. Mademoiselle was delighted, and stayed up till 2 A.M. discussing the situation. The next day being Lady-Day, she went to Mass at seven and then started for the refractory city. On her arrival a message was sent from the authorities, intimating that as they had refused entrance to the royal troops, they could not with any decency let her in, but that if she would feign an illness that would detain her in the neighbourhood until their departure, the gates would be thrown open to her. Mademoiselle did not consent to this plan, and waited in person for three hours outside the



fast-closed barricade. This being without result, she retired to a country inn and amused herself by reading the letters in the bag of the Bordeaux courier captured by her men. That done, she ate some sweetmeats sent by the governor of the town, and then walked round a portion of the ramparts, which were crowded with people curious to see her. On the wall by the gate she espied the captain of the fortifications, who merely bowed when she shouted threats at him over the moat. It seems that on this expedition she was only accompanied by a few guards and two ladies, and that at moments she left them far behind. On her excursion round the town she perceived a barricaded postern in the wall, some way from the large gate. The moment she saw this door Mademoiselle determined to effect an entrance by it. Some boatmen offered to ferry her over the Loire and break open the postern, and she climbed onto the raised bank "like a cat." "I caught my clothes," says she, "on the brambles and thorns, and I jumped over all the hedges without hurting myself in the least." Her ladies, probably less given to such gymnastics, were horrified at the prospect before them, and one of them diverted her mistress by breaking out into good round oaths. The crossing was effected in two boats, and the three ladies were hoisted precariously up a broken ladder on to the little quay. The boatmen having taken two planks from the door with the assistance of friendly hands inside, a breach was made in the middle of it. Mademoiselle was carried from the landing-stage over the heavy mud and dexterously shot through the hole into the town of Orleans. The moment her head appeared a kitchen chair was produced, and the princess, shaking with triumphant laughter, was carried high aloft, while the people kissed her hanging hands as she passed. Soon, however, she ordered the bearers to put her down, so that the two ladies, now plastered with mud from head to foot, might catch her up. The governors of the town had meanwhile set out to meet her and to pour forth a torrent of excuses. But Mademoiselle spoke to them as if nothing out of the common had occurred, and even consoled them by pointing out that the

King could not be angry with them for admitting her, as she had got in by her own efforts entirely. The next day was Maundy Thursday. Mademoiselle heard Mass, and then harangued an assembly at the town hall. "I was," she owned, "most horribly nervous: I had never spoken in public, and I did not at all know how to do it." A few days later she seems to have become proficient in the art, for she describes a meeting at which she laid down the law "as a lady of my quality should." The next incident was a sudden altercation between the Duc de Nemours and his brother-in-law the Duc de Beaufort. Mademoiselle, delighted to play the part of arbitrator, compelled them to give up their swords to her. M. de Beaufort was willing to be reconciled to his enemy, but M. de Nemours raged and swore although—or perhaps because—he was obliged to listen to Mademoiselle's exhortations till one o'clock in the night. The lady then returned to her lodgings, having first compelled the combatants to kiss each other. She also ordered their officers not to obey them until the quarrel had been made up.

The town was now completely in Mademoiselle's hands, but there was no competent general on the spot to hold it for her party. At this point Condé suddenly arrived incognito and the situation was saved. Mademoiselle at once returned to Paris to procure reinforcements for the prince. She also herself put down a tumult near the Hôtel de Ville, and proclaimed her anti-Mazarin views, by carrying a fan into which were tied wisps of straw, the emblem of the party, with pale blue ribbon. The fight between Condé and Turenne in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and Mademoiselle's *coup de théâtre* with the cannons of the Bastille, took place at this juncture. Adventures of the same type characterised the rest of the year. But the "princely Fronde" was now beginning to languish. Gaston had been disgraced and was at Blois, and Mademoiselle herself retired to her house at Saint-Fargeau shortly before Mazarin's return to Paris. Her absence from Court lasted nearly four years. She employed this period in carrying on law-suits with her father, and laughing at the pettiness of her

neighbours and attendants. The supervision she exercised over the latter was often very embarrassing to them. The steward even sought to turn her from asking inconvenient questions by assuring her that "persons of her quality ought to play and amuse themselves and never hear their affairs discussed." Remarks of this description aroused the suspicions of the princess, and she at once called in her household books. These she found to have been falsified. Her servants were, as she says "confounded." One of them confided to her the fact that his confessor refused to give him absolution until he returned the money thus fraudulently acquired. "Domestic worries," concluded Mademoiselle, "are a hundred times more trying than anxiety about the most important things."

Marriage projects also served to wile away the time. One day a Jesuit arrived from the Duke of Neubourg to ask the honour of her hand. Mademoiselle had no intention of burying herself in so obscure a duchy, but interviewed the priest nevertheless. That she hoped to get some amusement out of the scene is evident from the fact that one of her household was hidden under the table. Her secretary, Préfontaine, who should have been present, was obliged to make his escape at an early stage to conceal his laughter, but he was bidden to listen at the door. The Jesuit, suspecting no doubt that he was being laughed at, nervously clutched his cloak with both hands and stood there, says Mademoiselle, looking ridiculous. Finally he pulled out a miniature of the Duke and handed it to her. She made various suitable speeches in reply, and then declined the honour of the alliance, on the pretext that the plans of her family were at present in too great confusion for her to think of matrimony.

A pleasant diversion in an otherwise monotonous existence was afforded by a visit to Forges, one of the most fashionable watering-places of the period. The journey began with an adventure. The party lost its way in a wood, in which it blundered about all through the night. Forges was not reached till 4 A.M. Mademoiselle bethought herself



that it would be best to have the church opened and the priest waked, so that she might hear Mass then and there, instead of having to get up again later. The curé was fetched, and he not only performed the service but also detained her by a harangue. As Mademoiselle does not specify the nature of the homily, it is impossible to know whether zeal or resentment incited him to this work of supererogation. The life at Forges was leisurely and regular. Fine ladies with "vapours," accustomed to rise at eleven or twelve o'clock, were hustled out of bed not later than six. A walk in the fresh and clean morning air to the fountain, and a slow imbibing of its waters, occupied about two hours. Acquaintances who had drifted apart since the previous season hailed each other as long-lost friends. The women put their heads together to discuss their own and other people's husbands and the "wild-Indian mode of dressing the hair." The entire life and conversation of newcomers were observed, enquired into, and catalogued. The gathering seems, however, to have been a very friendly one. Huguenot ministers conversed with Spanish monks; nuns again beheld the pomp and pride of life, and reprobates found themselves in unwonted but not unpleasing proximity to pillars of the Church. "One learns the names of all those," writes Mademoiselle, "who arrived the night before. When there are newcomers, one accosts them: nowhere else in the world is it easier to form acquaintances. When we have drunk the water we go into the garden of the Capucins, which is not walled in, because it is the only place where one can enjoy walking; besides, if it were enclosed, women would not be allowed inside, except with persons of my quality, of whom so few exist that often none of them happen to be at Forges."

But Mademoiselle's real element was Paris, although in later life she began to feel that existence at Court was not all she had imagined it to be. "I used to have great difficulty," she writes, "in conceiving how a person used to the Court could occupy his mind when reduced to country life, for I had always held that nothing could amuse one during exile, and that

absence from Court was, to the great, entire solitude, in spite of the number of their servants and the society of their visitors." She must therefore have been greatly relieved by her recall in 1657, although she was too proud to own it. The reflection that one "does not suffer heat or have to get up early" when away from Court, had been but poor comfort to one so sociable.

The chief object of attention at this moment was Christine, Queen of Sweden, whose entry into Paris, no less than her eccentricity and total disregard of convention, set all tongues wagging. Mademoiselle had once before enjoyed the pleasure of contemplating this lady at Fontainebleau, where an interview took place under the following circumstances. Mademoiselle's first care in negotiating the visit was to ascertain the manner of the reception she might hope to meet with, and to make an unprecedented demand for the right of having an arm-chair in the Queen's presence. It was not her intention to be backward in asserting her French dignity in the presence of foreign royalty; but the claim was an exorbitant one, and Duc de Béthune, when he heard of it, was fain to conceal his laughter thereat. The Queen, however, possessed a "masculine mind," and never concerned herself about such trivialities. The chair was granted, and Christine even enquired whether her visitor would wish to take precedence of her. Any such intention being repudiated, the meeting at last took place in a fine room arranged "after the Italian fashion." Still the Queen was but human, and Mademoiselle found that benches had been put all round Christine's seat, so that she could only go two paces to meet the French princess. The latter thus records the scene: "I had heard so much about the strangeness of her dress that I was dying of fright lest I should laugh when I saw her. As they were announcing me and clearing a way for me to pass, I caught sight of her. She surprised me, but not in such a way as to make me laugh. She had on a grey petticoat, trimmed with gold and silver lace, and a jacket of flame-coloured camlet with lace like that on the petticoat. Round her neck was a kerchief of Genoese point, tied with a flame-coloured ribbon; she had a



fair wig . . . and in her hand she held a hat with black feathers. She has a white skin and blue eyes, which look sometimes gentle and sometimes fierce ; her mouth is pleasing though large ; her teeth beautiful, her nose large and aquiline. She is very short and her jacket hides her bad figure. Altogether she looked to me like a pretty little boy. She kissed me and said, 'I am overjoyed at the honour of seeing you, and I have passionately desired [this visit].' She gave me her hand to help me over the bench, saying, 'You have some aptitude for jumping !' " (Christine had probably heard of the Orleans episode.) Mademoiselle then took possession of her arm-chair and witnessed a ballet and a comedy. She appears, however, to have watched her hostess rather than the actors. "Christine," she says, "swore by the Almighty, lolled in her seat, threw her legs first one way and then the other, or hung them over the arm of the chair and performed gymnastics such as I have seen done by no one except Trivelin and Jodelet, two clowns, one Italian and the other French. She repeated the lines that pleased her, and this she did with some distinction. Now and then she fell into a brown study, sighed deeply and then suddenly came to herself like a person rudely awakened. She is a most extraordinary person."

The visitor had regaled all her friends with an account of this call, with the result that Christine received a great deal of attention on her arrival in Paris. Before her departure she was honoured by yet another visit from Mademoiselle. The latter arrived when the Queen was in bed. Nothing of interest passed, and Mademoiselle had ample leisure to observe that there was a candle on the table : that the Queen had a napkin tied round her head : that her night-dress had no collar although it was fastened with a flame-coloured ribbon : that the sheets only came half-way up the bed : and that the latter was covered with a shabby yellow counterpane. This untidiness was probably due to the fact that the Queen travelled without any women. The general opinion of the French Court regarding Christine was not a

favourable one. Her vagaries and her half-masculine costume only amused by their novelty, and her free manner shocked people as much as the vague rumours of her unscrupulousness alarmed them. It was said that a nobleman who had slandered her was sent for by the Queen, and ordered to go into a neighbouring gallery, where he found a sentinel and a priest. The former briefly said: "Confess your sins—there is Father Le Bel." The victim was accorded but short shrift, and then dispatched by the sentinel. This story did not tend to reassure men's minds, and the Queen was soon given to understand that a prolonged stay would not be welcomed. Mazarin had even permitted some insulting verses to be written about her, and ordered them to be sung if she stayed too long. Fortunately the hint was unnecessary.

The King's marriage and the death of Gaston both took place in 1660. Mademoiselle felt a "sensible regret" at the loss. Her stepmother's conduct on this occasion, as on most others, aroused her anger. "Madame," she says, "was very mean." The priests and watchers who prayed by the body of Gaston were dismissed at night, and neither lights nor fires were provided for them in the gloomy chamber during the daytime. Gaston was shrouded in a sheet off his own bed. His laughter observes that Madame met with a like indignity on her own death.

Of the splendours of the King's journey to the Spanish frontier to fetch his bride, there is here no room to speak. Suffice it to say that the best period of the reign dates from this event. Now there crowds on to the stage that great array of splendid figures to whom, in large measure, Louis XIV. owes the impression he has made on the mind of posterity. Bossuet, massive in intellect as in person, preached orthodoxy from fashionable pulpits, or brought his mind to bear upon the problem of Mademoiselle de la Vallière. Madame de Montespan grew in beauty and power day by day, until she found that she had "nursed a serpent in her bosom." Descartes was dead, and Pascal about to die; but Molière was at his prime and Colbert maturing his wholesome

schemes for the heightening of French prestige. There was vitality and movement in life as in art and literature. Mademoiselle was still young enough to enter into the excitement with zest, and her sense of humour enabled her occasionally to laugh at, even while secretly sympathising with, the pretensions of her acquaintances. But the possibilities of the Fronde were now over, and Mademoiselle's career became merged in the wider tide of Court routine. Henceforth she is one of a crowd, and, with the exception of her marriage, no one incident of her later life detaches itself from the surrounding scenery. Of the marriage, a word must be said further on. It is now time to speak of other persons at that time conspicuous at Court.

Life was varied: gambling, dancing, quarrelling, and perchance praying, occupied the livelong day. Every one was constantly on the alert to detect and nip in the bud, any encroachment on his or her dignity or privilege. Most persons were at the same time attempting to raise themselves into the sphere above them by imperceptible advances. The letters of the period largely consist of indignant accounts of such pretensions, and of their very proper suppression. Stickling for etiquette was sometimes carried to an almost incredible pitch of absurdity. Mademoiselle d'Alençon, half-sister of Mademoiselle, and distinguished for her genuine piety, was nevertheless in the habit of keeping her diocesan standing for hours, while she discussed charitable projects with him. Further, on her marriage with the Duc de Guise, it was expressly stipulated that he should only have a folding-stool to sit upon in the presence of his wife. He was not entitled to dine with her, although he was required to be present in order to hand her the napkin. Still the Duchess so far waived her right as to give a fresh order every day for a plate, etc., to be brought in for him. Permission to sit down was also accorded to him. The fact that the order was not given once for all was perhaps intended to remind the Duke that he was only dining with his wife *par courtoisie*. At Gaston's own marriage, in 1620, an unseemly quarrel



about precedence, between the Duchesse de Rohan and the Maréchale de Schomberg, had ended in a scuffle at the church door. The ladies scratched each other's faces, while their male relatives came to blows in the churchyard. The curé came out to remonstrate, but peace was not restored until much of the wedding finery was hanging in shreds from the shoulders of the combatants. Saint-Simon also relates that the Duchesse d'Orléans once solved a question of precedence by lying in bed and weeping for several days—the former to prevent and the second to lament the possibility of having to chaperon her unmarried daughter into an assembly where the wives of princes of the Blood would take precedence of the young girl.

Again, when the Court travelled and lodgings were being apportioned to the courtiers in a strange town, their names were written in chalk on the doors of the apartments assigned to them. Cardinals and princes had the privilege of having "for" written before their names; less exalted persons had to be content with their names only. Saint-Simon, contrary to what one would have expected, declares the custom to be absurd, and is inclined to blame those who approve of it.

Precedence in the streets was a frequent subject of dispute. The narrowness of the Parisian streets made it impossible for large coaches to pass each other, and when two met, that of the lesser dignitary was obliged to back to the next cross-road. This necessity often occasioned a heated argument extending over several hours. Pedigrees were recited, and claims to precedence set forth in imposing phalanxes. Sometimes, too, the combatants would sit expectant in their respective vehicles in the hope that the opposite party would end by taking a more proper view of the matter. A famous example of this type of quarrel is that between Madame l'Elbœuf and her daughter, the Princess of Mantua, on the one side, and M. and Madame de Montbazon on the other. The two coaches met in a narrow thoroughfare. Madame l'Elbœuf lost no time in sending a gentleman to M. de



Montbazon to tell him that the Princess of Mantua was in her coach, and that therefore it was naturally understood that his own would give place. The Duke replied that he would do so with pleasure, if his wife were not with him, adding that he was not aware that Madame de Mantoue could take precedence of her. The messenger returned from the Mantuan coach-door to say that his mistress was entitled to take precedence of every other princess except the Electress of Bavaria, then in Paris. The Duke answered that he felt great respect for the two ladies, but no inclination to yield to their claims. At this point the two coachmen began to swear at each other, and words would, no doubt, have soon borne fruit in blows, had not the princess's mother put her head out of the window and ordered her coachman to drive on. On this, the Duke announced that he would give "a hundred blows" to any one who dared to approach his carriage. The conclusion of the matter was that both vehicles advanced simultaneously "at the expense of the little shops along the walls," tearing down signboards and shutters, and endangering the lives of the passers-by thus caught between Scylla and Charybdis. But "honour" had been saved on both sides, and all remained satisfied except the shopkeepers.

Personal adornment also ruined many a household. Lands, houses, everything was sacrificed to the mania for cutting a figure at Court. Madame de Sévigné told her daughter that Madame de Fiesque had sold "a wretched estate that produced nothing but corn," in order to buy a large mirror. The anxious mother perhaps hoped by this little anecdote to moderate the mad extravagance of Madame de Grignan, who was ruining herself in Provence by ostentation and betting. Her house there had 165 windows, and 100 visitors and servants could be lodged in it. Not content with the outlay thereby involved, both M. and Madame de Grignan lost large sums by gambling. Among courtiers, the play was even more reckless. Madame de Montespan is said to have lost 4,000,000 livres at a sitting, and to have

insisted on going on playing until she had won it back again. Madame de Sévigné, greatly disapproving of the practice, speaks constantly of the high play at Court.

On 9th October 1675 she writes to her daughter :—

“Immense sums are gambled away at Versailles. Hoca is forbidden in Paris on pain of death, yet people play it in the King’s room : 5000 pistoles in a morning is nothing. It is a regular gambling hell. Be sure you banish this game from your household.”

Among the persons whose singular good-fortune roused the envy of their neighbours, the nieces of Mazarin were pre-eminent. As soon as the cardinal had worked his way from a humble position as dependent of Richelieu to that of the Queen-Mother’s chief adviser, he sent for his sister’s children, in the hope that they might make their fortune in France. That they did so will be seen from the list of the alliances they succeeded in contracting. The first contingent consisted of Laura Mancini, who was already beautiful, though only thirteen years old ; of her sister, Olympe, a plain child, aged ten ; of their brother Paul ; and of their cousin, Anne-Marie Martinozzi, a fair, pretty little girl, also aged ten. Of these, the beautiful and pious Laura was married at the age of fifteen to the Duc de Mercœur, and died four years later. Paul was mortally wounded in the fight at the Porte Sainte-Antoine. Anne-Marie married the Prince de Conti. Of Olympe more will be said.

In and after 1663, five more of the cardinal’s nephews and nieces arrived. These were Laura Martinozzi, who married the Duke of Modena ; Hortense, later Duchesse de Mazarin ; Marie-Anne Mancini, afterwards Duchesse de Bouillon ; Philippe Martinozzi, created Duc de Nevers ; finally Marie Mancini, whose fortunes deserve further mention. First, however, it is necessary to say a few words about her sister Olympe.

Olympe seems never to have been a child. From the day of her arrival in France she was determined to make her fortune, and being a born intriguer, she was not long in

maturing her childish plans. Even in her early teens she realised that she was not pretty and that she must rely on her wit and aplomb to make an impression. One of her first playfellows was the youthful King, and him she at once determined to make her slave. The prospect of this brilliant connection was, however, remote enough to induce her to contemplate other possible alliances. She was first offered to Armand de la Meilleraie, who refused her and chose Hortense instead. The Duke of Modena also preferred another of the cardinal's nieces. At last she found a husband in Eugène de Carignan, Comte de Soissons, of the House of Savoy. But in spite of her marriage, long acquaintance and the attraction of her caustic wit often drew the King to visit her, and it is said that at one period he did not disdain to love her.

Although Olympe had faced the fact that she was without beauty, she took every precaution to make the most of the charms she had. Her eyes were small though brilliant, and to them of course, nothing could be done. But her hands were fine, and it was her habit to lay them at night on little pillows expressly made to accommodate each separate finger. In the daytime she never closed them, so as to preserve the skin unwrinkled. In order to ensure the success of her schemes, Olympe had recourse to magic. She was implicated in the trial of the sorceress La Voisin, and dark suspicion fell upon her on the death, presumably by poison, of the French Queen of Spain. She was finally compelled to flee to the Low Countries, and there she died in great penury. Her life was an agitated one, fruitful of little good; but it must never be forgotten that she was the mother of that great soldier, Eugène of Savoy.

It was at the Hôtel de Soissons that Louis XIV. chiefly met Marie Mancini grown up. She appears to have been the cleverest and liveliest of the cousins. Without having the classic beauty of Laura, she could boast of a face and figure even more fascinating. Her hair was black, her complexion delicate, and her movements full of grace and dignity.

Added to these advantages was a natural distinction of manner, which even the most high-born ladies in France occasionally lacked. Above all, she was fresh and unaffected and happy. It is therefore not surprising that the young King fell in love with her, and that she returned the passion with the vehemence of the Italian temperament. The lovers met when they could and surmounted every possible difficulty in order to correspond during absence. It must be said to Mazarin's honour that he discountenanced the friendship and finally forbade all intercourse. When the project of the King's marriage was announced, both Louis and Marie gave way to despair. Louis still vowed he would marry her, and Marie continued to hope until the marriage with Maria Theresa made such a hope futile. The King continued to protest that he loved her and only her, and that he would never let her leave the Court. Mazarin, however, put an end to the difficulties of the situation by affiancing his niece to the Connétable de Colonna, and Marie started for Rome with apparent resignation. Louis himself came out to see her go, and was overcome with weeping on parting with his former love. So ended the only real love story of *Le Roi Soleil*. The "dark ladie" drove off into the unknown world, and Louis went back into his palace to his humdrum wife and the routine that his kingship had hung like a stone about his neck.

Among the ladies who owed their position at the Court of Louis XIV. to their beauty, Louise de-la-Baume-le-Blanc was perhaps the most attractive as she was certainly the most estimable. She was simple-minded, singularly free from malice, and of an angelic temper. Never was there a more unselfish person. She alone of all the King's mistresses really loved him and desired his good, and her life was one long struggle in which her passion for Louis and her desire to please him were opposed to her conviction that she ought to flee from him for his sake as well as her own. Even before his marriage Louis had been drawn by the beauty of this lady-in-waiting. The intrigue was at first kept as secret



as possible. The first scandal which occurred in connection with it was due to the scruples of Louise herself. In 1662 she resolved to run away from her lover. Her first refuge was the Benedictine Abbey at Saint-Cloud. The rumour of her flight soon spread. The King absented himself from the sermon, and, muffled in a grey cloak, set out in person to look for her in one direction, while Colbert was dispatched in another with orders to search all possible places. On learning where she was, Louis hastened to the convent\* and threatened to burn it down if the runaway was not given up to him at once. The poor girl was compelled to return to her former life, but soon made a further attempt to escape. On this occasion the *Filles de Sainte-Marie* at Chaillot harboured her for a short time; but the captain of the guard was sent with an armed escort to fetch her, and from henceforth Louise realised that flight was impossible. Her public reign at Court began in 1663. In 1667 she was created Duchesse de la Vallière. Her prosperity was, however, not long-lived. Louis, having forced her into a position of which she could not approve, gradually abandoned her in favour of the far more beautiful and far more unscrupulous Madame de Montespan. Finally, in 1674, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, having suffered from the cruel indifference of Louis as well as from the unparalleled rudeness of her triumphant rival, procured the King's permission to take the veil. Her retirement at the age of thirty-one into the strict Carmelite House in the *Rue Saint-Jacques* roused great astonishment at Court. In the following year she was professed under the name of "Sœur Marie de la Miséricorde." Before leaving the world she begged the Queen's pardon for the wrong she had done her, and it was said that she spent a whole year without drinking as a penance for her sins. Now that all jealousies were stifled by her removal from Court, people only remembered her generosity. Many visitors, including members of the royal family, came to see her in her convent, and it was the King's

\* This convent was founded by Henrietta-Maria, and here she spent the last part of her life.

wish that she should be permitted to sit in the presence of his relatives.

Her place was meanwhile far more brilliantly if scandalously occupied by Madame de Montespan. This beautiful person was one of three sisters, all remarkable for their wit as well as their fine appearance. They were of the ancient House of Rochechouart. The handsomest of the three is said to have been the Abbess of Fontevrault. The least pretty was Madame de Thianges, who also met with much favour from the King when she came to live at Court, after having left her husband and abandoned his arms and liveries. The remaining sister, Françoise-Athénais, born in 1641, was the wife of M. de Montespan, and became the most famous of the King's mistresses. A more complete contrast than that presented by her to Madame de la Vallière could hardly be imagined. The latter evoked affection by her charm: Madame de Montespan commanded it by her domineering perfection of body and the bright glancing of her happy wit. The King had no real love for her, but, as has been remarked, he felt that he owed it to himself to love the most beautiful woman in France. Her haughty character and the outbursts of temper, in which not even he was spared, roused the King's anger, and quarrels between them were loud and frequent. But for over seven years Madame de Montespan kept her influence over Louis. The breach with her husband was never healed even after she had left the Court for good. It must be said to her credit that on her first arrival there, when she perceived which way the wind blew, she implored her husband to take her back to her home in the country. He was too careless or too ambitious to comply, although he was even more in love with his wife than every one else. Her surmises proved to be true, her scruples vanished, and her husband, too long incredulous, retired to his estates and remained there for the rest of his life. Many years after, the Père de la Tour induced the King's discarded mistress to beg her husband's forgiveness and to offer to put herself into his hands, but his only answer was that he never wished

to hear of that person again. During the latter part of Louise de la Vallière's reign, Madame de Montespan affected to be her friend; but as soon as her own supremacy was established, she lost no opportunity of making the fallen Duchess feel the loss of her position. Madame de Montespan's worst point was her haughty assumption that she was above all laws both human and divine; her best was her generosity. She was fond of giving presents, and often organised lotteries even in the convents whither she resorted for prayer. Madame de Sévigné writes in 1676: "The Queen has twice been to the Carmelites with Quanto (*i.e.* Madame de Montespan). The latter took it into her head to have a lottery, and sent for every kind of thing suitable to nuns. This caused much amusement in the community. She conversed at some length with Sœur Louise de la Miséricorde (Madame de la Vallière). The end of the anecdote is characteristic. "Quanto then wished to eat. She sent to fetch the ingredients necessary for a sauce, which she made herself and which she ate with excellent appetite."

The splendour of this lady's household exceeded that of the Queen, as much as her radiant hair and complexion threw into contrast the heavy colouring of Maria Theresa. The verdict on her beauty is unanimous. Here is Madame de Sévigné's testimony:

"July 29, 1676.—But, seriously, her beauty is perfectly astonishing. She has grown thinner, but neither her colouring, nor her eyes, nor her lips have suffered from the change. She was clad in French point lace, and her hair dressed in numerous curls; the two on her temples fell low down upon her cheeks. On her head was a black bow, the pearls of the Maréchale de l'Hôpital embellished with buckles and pendants of very fine diamonds, but no cap. In a word, she is a triumphant beauty, calculated to call forth the admiration of all the ambassadors." Again: "Her beauty is extreme, her ornaments are as splendid as her beauty, and her gaiety as her ornaments." All her children were pretty, but the most



charming was perhaps the little Comte de Toulouse. Mademoiselle so much admired him that she had a portrait of him in her billiard-room, in which he was represented in a shell on the sea, as a little "divinity of that element." One imagines, somehow, that this portrait must resemble Watts' "Fishing of Cupid." This child was brought up in retirement with his brother and sisters, but in 1671 he was sent for to Saint-Germain, and recognised by Louis. Every one was enthralled by his delightful manners. "The Count," says one, "was beautiful as an angel, but a little shy. He was not accustomed to seeing strangers. He wanted to be always in the arms of his valet, to whom he kept on repeating: 'Picard, don't abandon me.' His brother, the Duc du Maine, was lame, but his sisters, Mademoiselle de Nantes and the second Mademoiselle de Blois, had some beauty. The other four children of Madame de Montespan died in infancy.

Until 1676 Madame de Montespan was supreme at Court, but she had unwittingly prepared the weapons for her own destruction, and from that date her decline began. The difficulty of bringing up her children had from the first occupied her serious attention, and she soon began to search for a well-connected, well-educated, and thoroughly reliable woman, who would consent to live in the greatest retirement and act as their governess. Someone mentioned the widow of the poet Scarron to her, and a chance remark thus changed the trend of French history. This lady's maiden name was Françoise d'Aubigny. Although of good birth (she was the grand-daughter of the stern soldier of that name), she had passed her youth in great penury. She was therefore only too glad to accept the hand of a paralytic author, and to act as his nurse in return for a shabby little home and food to eat. On his death she was again left almost penniless. Indeed, she tells us herself that she did not accept invitations for lack of suitable clothes, until it occurred to her to wear plain dresses always made on the same pattern. This plan did away with the necessity of being in the fashion, besides



having an air of sobriety very becoming to her severe beauty.

Madame Scarron undertook the charge of the King's children and acquitted herself admirably of the task. She was, however, so rigid and cold that the King, who sometimes called to hear the lessons, conceived a lively aversion for her. So strong was his prejudice against the governess, that Madame de Montespan was constrained to take up the cudgels in her defence. But gradually her "fine arm" as well as her solid conversation began to attract Louis, and his visits to the schoolroom were more frequent than the children's mother approved. By 1680, the "moral" influence of the pious governess, combined with the biting tongue of the mistress and the youthful freshness of a new star, began to bring about an estrangement between the King and Madame de Montespan.\* The latter retired from Court, and Louis spent his time between listening to the harangues of Scarron's widow and dallying with the new star, Mademoiselle de Fontanges. Concerning this poor girl, who died at the age of twenty, Madame de Sévigné wrote just before Madame de Montespan left Paris: "Mademoiselle de Fontanges is a person of very unusual beauty. She appeared at the tribune (of the chapel) like a divinity: Madame de Montespan was on the other side, divinity number two." Even the King's proud German sister-in-law, whose time was spent in praising all things German at the expense of everything she saw in France, writes thus admiringly of the King's new mistress. "The Fontanges, although the colour of her hair verged on auburn,† was lovely from head to foot. It would be impossible to behold anything more marvellous. Also she had the best disposition imaginable, but no more intelligence than a little kitten." This observation accords with the opinion of the Abbé de Choisy, who summed up her qualities in the remark: "She had the beauty of an angel and the stupidity of a basket."

\* For other causes, see Chapter IV.

† An unfashionable tint in the seventeenth century.

Her death and the united siege laid to the royal conscience by La Chaize and the governess was instrumental in instituting a new mode of life for Louis. Madame de Montespan visited the Court once more, but she and everyone else felt that the episode of her reign was at an end. In 1682 it became evident that Madame Scarron, now Marquise de Maintenon, enjoyed all the King's confidence. She still occupied herself with her pupils, but the King now came regularly to see her before and after supper. The Queen died in 1683, leaving Louis a free man again. A few months later Madame de Montespan was deprived of her rooms next to the King's apartments, and in 1685 her virtuous rival was enjoying a favour so unparalleled that the King's marriage with her became a moral certainty. It was said that the ceremony had taken place at night in the chapel at Versailles, with the Archbishop of Paris, Père La Chaize, and the valet Bontemps as its only witnesses. Madame de Montespan never saw the King again, and the latter seems to have felt as little regret at her loss as he did on learning the death of Louise de la Vallière. The twenty-two years of her exile were spent in restless wanderings from place to place. She was sometimes heard to say that she hoped the King's wife would die, so that she might return to him. Apart from this sentiment her dispositions appear to have been all that the pious Madame de Maintenon could have desired. All through her life she had clung to certain shreds of outward piety, such as fasting in Lent and going into retreat at the Convent of Saint-Joseph. The Court had frequently been privileged to behold her and Mademoiselle de la Vallière going to confession on the same day. She had even been known to leave the King, in order to pray in her cabinet. Now that the world had no more to offer her, she gave herself up to making what atonement was possible for the past. Under her fine linen sheets and shifts were others made of rough unbleached material. Also for many years she wore bracelets and garters and a belt set with iron spikes. Her time was spent in making clothes for the poor. But no

amount of mortification could free her from an inordinate and panic fear of death. A nameless horror was wont to settle upon her at night, and to grip her whenever she woke. So great was her dread of silence that her women were required to sit up all night in her room. Candles were kept alight until the morning, and food was set out on tables so that if she awoke she might find the watchers eating and laughing. The fear of being ill perpetually beset her, although she never called in a doctor. In spite of her secret mortification, her manners were ever those of a Queen. The few visitors she received were ushered according to universal custom into the bedroom. At the foot of the bed was an arm-chair for the hostess, but there were no others in the room, nor was one brought for even the Duchesse d'Orléans, her daughter. La Grande Mademoiselle was alone offered such a chair, but even she was obliged to make her farewells in the room. Madame de Montespan could never forget that she had been virtual Queen, and utterly declined to show any one the courtesy of accompanying him to the door. Her death took place at Bourbon in 1707. Her last action was to call in her household and acknowledge that she had caused great scandal to the nation, besides having caused many persons to suffer by her ill-temper. The fear of death now left her, and she died in peace, aged seventy years. As only too often happened at that period, the servants at once left their dead mistress in order to seek their fortune elsewhere, and her body lay in a house that was empty save for the "lowest menials." The funeral was mean and undignified, and few tears were shed over that tragic bier.

Of the subsequent career of the King's wife it is better to speak in connection with her educational schemes. Socially she was a dead weight. That is to say, that although her conversation was cultivated and her manner grand, it was her policy to discourage anything that might undo the "good work" she had begun in the King. Madame de Maintenon laboured to wean the Court from its affection for dancing, light plays, and frivolous amusements, and to foster, instead



a taste for serious occupations and works of solid merit. Posterity must indirectly be grateful to her for *Athalie* and *Esther*, written by Racine at her instigation, and she also did much lasting good by originating and developing very sound theories on the education of girls. Opinions concerning this extraordinary woman will probably be divided till the end of time. Some people agree with the Duchesse d'Orléans who saw in her merely a "Tartuffe dressed in russet." These persons label her piety prudery, her benevolence a striving for effect, her sobriety "frumpishness." Those of the opposite persuasion declare her religion to have been entirely sincere, her one aim to save the King's soul, and her best quality an absence of personal ambition. All agree that she was a very clever woman. Saint-Simon hated her, and Madame wept at the thought of having such a sister-in-law. Still the girls at Saint-Cyr, even those who were not prigs, looked forward to her coming, and the little Duc du Maine loved her passionately. Posterity, at a loss for a verdict, can but take refuge in the word "remarkable," and apply it to her with whatever meaning each individual pleases.

It was only natural that on the King's return to an ordered life his family should begin to occupy a more prominent position at Court, and consequently in the *Mémoires* of the time. The portraits of these royal personages scattered about the pages of Saint-Simon and others are of very great interest. It is pathetic to observe how the intelligence of Louis XIV. had degenerated in his descendants. Nor was such a character as that of Gaston's daughter to be found among the princesses of the early eighteenth century. Mademoiselle maintained her reputation for romantic unconventionality to the end. In the later sixties she had become intimate with a nobleman named Lauzun, conceived an affection for him, and finally in 1670 asked him to marry her. The horror of the royal family at such a *mésalliance* can be imagined. The King was especially averse to the match (he had not as yet been led to defy the



conventions himself by a desire to marry his children's governess). After a series of stormy interviews, the marriage was sanctioned on Monday, 15th December. Mademoiselle wished the wedding to take place in a week, so that there might be as little opportunity as possible for the King to change his mind. Till Wednesday all went well. Mademoiselle collected her trousseau, the Court marvelled, and Lauzun congratulated himself on marrying a wife who was not only royal but also rich. On Thursday the bomb burst. The lovers were forbidden to think of marrying, and Lauzun left the Court. He was subsequently imprisoned on the pretext that he had insulted Madame de Montespan. In 1682 it occurred to the latter that she might draw advantage from this circumstance in the following way. Distance had only increased Mademoiselle's infatuation for Lauzun, and it was evident that she would do all in her power in order to obtain his release. Madame de Montespan's lame son, the Duc du Maine, was ill-endowed. His mother therefore offered to obtain Lauzun's release if Mademoiselle would in return bestow some one of her great estates on the Duke. Mademoiselle at once yielded up the Comté d'Eu and the sovereignty of Dombes. Her lover was released from the fortress of Pignerol, where Fouquet had been his fellow-prisoner, and it was believed that Mademoiselle secretly married him. Lauzun, at no time a very estimable character, had been embittered by the misfortunes brought upon him by a hitherto profitless intrigue; and now that he had at last reached the goal, he did not greatly seek to hide his resentment. Mademoiselle, for her part, would brook no opposition. She had expected a docile and grateful husband, and when she discovered him to be unfaithful, she simply, says Saint-Simon, "scratched his face." Constant quarrels soon brought about a separation, and in 1686 Lauzun went to England, where he was instrumental in bringing about the escape of the King and Queen. Mademoiselle meanwhile gave herself up, this time for good, to piety and charity. She witnessed the King's lapse from convention in 1685, but not

the series of deaths in the royal family which cast a gloom over the first years of the eighteenth century. Her death took place in 1693, and her great wealth was inherited by the Duke of Orleans, father of the Regent. Her qualities are thus summed up by the Princess Palatine, Anne of Gonzaga. "Mademoiselle, who has laid her hand on so many crowns, has a pretty wit and very little sense, lightness of head and weakness of character. She stands as much on her dignity as a *bourgeoise parvenue*. She is indiscreet from vanity, inconstant in her attachments, inconsequent in her aims. She has a remarkable genius for willing, wishing, and acting at exactly the wrong moment." She had formed the last link between the irresponsible and happy spirit of Old France and that age of liberation which began so tentatively with the unconscious Fénelon and reached its climax with Voltaire.

Louis XIV.'s entry into the eighteenth century was a portentous one. The scarlet and the trumpets of his glorious youth had vanished. The King was old, preoccupied and helpless in the midst of his despotism. He ruled his country with a rod of iron, while necessity and the fetish of routine ruled him. The race of great men had gone the way of all flesh. Fénelon alone waited so that his King might not fare companionless down to the narrow House of Hades. Mediocrity prevailed in Court and town, and the attention once monopolised by the beauty of La Vallière or the daredevil genius of Condé, was now languidly bestowed on the King's domestic circle. The persons composing it were in the strictest bondage to the King and had little opportunity for original development. Everything was decided for them: their residences, wives, confessors, occupations were chosen By Louis. It is therefore not astonishing that a general but perpetual fear and discontent should have pervaded the royal family. This subjection was particularly obnoxious to the King's brother, who resented being in tutelage to one with whom he had fought and played in the nursery. Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, had neither the natural dignity nor the acquired *savoir-faire* of Louis. Much of his time was spent

in devising toilets, or in standing about his rooms gossiping, or nibbling cakes, of which he kept a store in his pocket. He liked to be amused, and looked back with regret to the fancy-dress parties of his youth. His first wife was Henrietta-Maria of England, daughter of Charles I. Her sudden death in 1670, and that of her daughter the Queen of Spain in 1689, were both attributed to poison. The latter tragedy may have been due to a crime, but it is now almost certain that the mother did not die of drinking poisoned chicory water, but of ulcers in the stomach. Philippe's second wife was a very different person. Charlotte-Elizabeth of Bavaria was probably born with a prejudice against France. She seems to have married a French prince against her better judgment, and she certainly spent her married life in making comparisons between Germany and France, to the disadvantage of the latter. Madame was short and buxom, having the dignity that often goes with a portly figure. Her eyes were fine and her mouth well formed. Ribbons fluttered from her dress, bracelets rattled, and her hair was redolent of scent. She was, however, very "clean," in spite of the fact that she rouged. Saint-Simon opined her to be perpetually sulky. He records that "she spent her days in a little room lighted by windows more than ten feet from the floor" (presumably that she might not see the contemptible soil of France). Here she occupied herself with "contemplating the portraits of the Electors of the Palatinate and the German princes with which she had lined the walls, and with writing volumes of letters," chiefly to the mother of our George I.

Among the many "affronts" suffered by Madame, the compulsory marriage of her son Philippe, Duc de Chartres, to Mademoiselle de Blois was not the least. The bride was the daughter of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan. It was the King's policy to provide for his illegitimate children, and to compel the country to recognise them, by marrying them to important noblemen or even members of his own family. The various accounts of the transactions relating to this marriage are of a very surprising nature. The King



sent for his brother and announced his intentions with the air of one conferring a favour. Monsieur, not daring to object too strongly, secretly hoped that his wife would raise some opposition. In this he was not mistaken. Madame's fury knew no bounds. The King had not as yet sent for his nephew. The mother rapidly explained to the frightened boy that she would never forgive him if he let himself be coerced into a *mésalliance*; that he must not lose his head during the impending interview; and that he must firmly decline, as if upon his own initiative, to enter upon such an engagement. It was meanwhile notified to the King that the parents could not consent until the views of the son had been ascertained. The trembling Duke was summoned to the royal Presence, where the project was formally announced to him and an answer demanded. His courage at once deserted him, as the King knew it would, and all he could do was to mumble something to the effect that it was the King's to command and his to obey. The next encounter with his mother took place in the long gallery filled with courtiers waiting for the King to pass on his way to chapel. Madame had already learned the result of the interview, and on seeing her son reluctantly advancing up the hall, her temper got the better of her. Before he had time to kiss her hand, two resounding slaps woke the echoes and paralysed the courtiers. To box a duke's ears at all was an unheard-of thing: to box them in public was an action not to be credited. Nor could the Court believe its eyes at the ceremony of the King's dinner. Louis was markedly polite to his sister-in-law, and made every effort to converse with her. He sent her portions of his choicest dishes, and ignored her refusal to answer when addressed. When, however, she turned her back on him and flounced out of the room in a fury of indignation, every one marvelled at the King's forbearance. The bride, who knew nothing of the squabble, was next apprised of her fate. She stood in such awe of the King that she literally shook on beholding him. The thunder in the moral atmosphere filled her with uneasiness and reduced her to tears. Her future



husband was also weeping with terror at the thought of what he had done, as well as with wounded pride: nor did the marriage thus entered upon prove any happier than might have been expected. Of the subsequent career of the bride it will be necessary to speak later. Concerning her husband it is sufficient to say that he is best known to history as the Regent Orleans.

Of the direct descendants of Louis XIV., the Dauphin was, of course, the first in position. He was a tall and well-built man, with a broken nose, which he owed to the fist of the youthful Conti. His chief interest was wolf-hunting. In state matters he was totally uninterested, nor did he care for literature other than the lists of marriages and deaths in the newspaper. The foreign news in the *Gazette de France* he never troubled himself to read. For art he had some feeling, and his rooms were deemed to be so tastefully furnished that James II. was especially invited to visit them. He took no active part in social life. He was, however, popular with the lower classes, because he frequented the opera and was a familiar figure in Paris. Indeed, when he was ill in 1701, four fishwives from the famous *Halles*, the Billingsgate of Paris, were deputed by the rest to go and enquire for him. The four were well-received and ushered in to behold the Prince in bed. He accepted their compliments and allowed himself to be kissed by one of the deputation. Bontemps then showed them the sights of the palace and entertained them at a meal. Saint-Simon, who hated Monseigneur, thus describes him: "Character? he had none. Sense? a little; but no sort of wit. A grand manner he had by nature, by prestance and by imitation of the King. . . . He was gentle from laziness and a kind of stupidity. . . . He was a hunter, but hunted without enjoyment: almost voluptuous, but without taste. He used to play high in order to win, but after he took to building, his time was spent in whistling in the corner of a room at Marly and in drumming with his fingers on his snuff-box. He used to stare with wide-open eyes at every one without taking anything in. He was, in short, without con-

versation or interest; I should like to add, without feeling or even thought." . . . When the Dauphin was recovering from his illness, the writer of the above extract and the Duchesse d'Orléans retired into a corner together to exchange condolences on their enemy's convalescence. "There was," says Saint-Simon, "not the least little grain of hope to be placed in apoplectic fits—and all the chance that indigestion once had was now ruined beyond recovery." It was therefore with a guilty joy that these amiable persons hailed the mortal illness which attacked the heir to the throne in 1711. The Duke records that he tried to calm his joy by thinking steadily of the day of his own death. "I was," he adds, "extremely ashamed of myself." The Dauphin died at Meudon late in the evening and the King returned the same night to his own palace. The Court was in great confusion, and each courtier was attempting to simulate grief and at the same time to observe the crocodile tears of the rest. The long gallery was thronged with half-dressed figures. The Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne and the Duc de Berri and his wife sat in a row on a sofa and rent the air with their cries. Of these persons, the Duchesse de Bourgogne was alone sincere in her grief. The future Regent, who had always hated Monseigneur, was, for some unknown reason, moved, and stood weeping with his head in a corner. As for his mother, "she arrived howling in full court dress, simply not knowing why she was weeping nor why she was dressed. She kissed them all, soaked them with her tears, and made the palace re-echo to a fresh series of lamentations. She also provided us with the strange spectacle of a princess who dresses herself again in all her finery in the middle of the night in order to come and weep and scream in a crowd of women half-clothed—one might almost say in fancy dress."

The Dauphine, Marie-Christine of Bavaria, was too delicate to take the lead in Court-life. The duty therefore devolved upon her daughter-in-law, Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy, the wife of Louis, Duc de Bourgogne. This young couple were without doubt the most noteworthy members of the royal circle.

The Duke had been a child of passionate temper and entirely untractable disposition. He was the despair of his nurses and governors. It was even feared that his fits of anger might injure his health. He would smash a clock that struck the hour for some hated duty, roll on the floor in a fever of fury at the weather, and rain blows upon the chairs and tables that were in his way. There seemed to be in him no good instinct to which appeal could be made. Even his habit of acknowledging his faults after the fit of passion was over was largely due to haughtiness. He was too proud not to admit self-evident facts. The apparently hopeless task of training so naughty a child was at length confided to Fénelon. The Court was now called upon to witness a progressive miracle. Fénelon, by dint of reasonable consideration and above all by a certain personal mesmerism, transformed his pupil from an unspeakably cruel and domineering boy, into an upright hard-working, and thoroughly Christian prince. The liberal instincts of the tutor led him to determine that the pupil was to differ as far as in him lay from his grandfather. The training afforded to him was admirable, so that in him France lost a ruler under whom all good things might have thriven, even if all bad ones had not been rooted out. The young Duke was far enough in advance of his time to feel sympathy with and to advocate toleration towards all men, even in matters of religion. In his youth all his pleasure had consisted in the fabrication of mordant epigrams. Now he preferred the silence of solitude to the possibility of being inadvertently led into making an uncharitable remark.

With his young wife, Marie-Adélaïde, he was as much in love as was every one who knew her. Before her arrival the Court was dull, a mournful piety reigned, and no one had the courage to be natural. She, fresh from the bright rivers and clear skies of Savoy, broke like a clean shower of April rain upon the arid soil of the French Court. Her conquest was accomplished before Mrs Grundy or any one else had time to protest against her most unroyal ways. The possibility of jesting with the King, of treating him as a mere relation, of



enjoying oneself naturally in his presence, was one which never occurred to the family of Louis XIV. To kiss him uninvited would have verged on sacrilege; to touch his papers, on treason; to laugh spontaneously, on indecency. But Madame de Bourgogne very soon "changed all that." She did not scruple to rush into the King's room where even the Dauphin feared to tread. There was no seemingly scratching on the door, no announcement, when the Duchess was minded to visit the King. When she knew him to be with Madame de Maintenon, Marie-Adélaïde was wont to burst in upon them, jump upon the King's knee and kiss him till both were breathless. She would then sit lightly on the arm of his chair and plunge cheerfully into the midst of a discussion on state affairs which her advent had interrupted. Even the pedagogic propriety of Madame de Maintenon was not proof against the wiles of the princess. Marie-Adélaïde did not question the position of the calm lady she found established in the King's esteem, nor did it occur to her to resent the necessity for familiarity with one not royal. While Madame raged at the presence of "the Maintenon," the Duchess stroked her cheek and called her "Aunt."

But in spite of her apparent thoughtlessness she occasionally gave proof of real penetration. Nor did the home truths with which she favoured Louis arouse the resentment which even the absence of a compliment in the address of any one else would have caused. These criticisms were usually uttered while the princess was racing round the room. "Aunt," said she on one occasion, recorded by Saint-Simon, "everyone must agree that in England queens govern better than kings; Auntie, do you know why?" (still running and jumping). "It is because under a king it is the women who govern, whereas under a queen it is the men." And the remarkable part of this story is that both of them laughed and agreed with her. She did not even hesitate to snatch the King's letters from him or open those that were brought while she was with him. There was nothing that she was not permitted to do. The extraordinary infatuation



of Madame de Maintenon, usually so cold-blooded, is one of the most convincing proofs of the Dauphine's charm. Had, for instance, any other princess ventured to amuse herself by taking snuff, Madame de Maintenon would at once have deemed it her duty to report the enormity to the King; but Madame de Bourgogne might steal a horse though no one else might look over the hedge. It was her cheerful simplicity rather than her appearance that wrought the miracle. Her features were plain though regular, and her teeth were bad. She had a good complexion, a fine figure, and walked admirably. Her eyes and eyebrows were grand. In dress she was careless, as may be expected of a princess who preferred making butter at Trianon to receiving ambassadors at Versailles. On her unexpected death in 1712, "darkness fell upon the face of the Court," and the King relapsed into the gloomy fatalism which hung about him as a cloak until his own departure.

The other princesses then at Court were greatly inferior to the "Seconde Dauphine." To the elder generation belonged the three sisters whose conduct filled even that uncritical society with alarm. These were: Mademoiselle de Nantes, daughter of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, and wife of the Duc de Bourbon; her sister, Mademoiselle de Blois, who married the Duc de Chartres, and their half-sister, another Mademoiselle de Blois, daughter of Mademoiselle de la Vallière and wife of the Prince de Conti. The quarrels and pretensions of these three ladies were the talk of the Court. A typical dispute was one which arose on the marriage of the Duc de Chartres. The other two sisters were bidden to call the bride *Madame*, as she was now the wife of a royal prince, whereas she was not required to give them any more honourable title than *sister*. Madame la Duchesse submitted, though the word stuck in her throat; but Madame de Conti evaded the difficulty by calling her *mignonne*. All were agreed that a more ridiculous appellation could not have been found for a very disagreeable young woman, and the trio thus again made good their claim to a

place in the forefront of Court gossip. They were entirely without a sense of the natural limits of a practical joke, and their audacity in parading the grounds late at night and letting off petards under Monsieur's windows, earned for them a severe rebuke from the King. It was seldom that all three were sufficiently in harmony to unite in mischief. Sometimes two drew upon themselves a rebuke, to the delight of the third, who had by chance escaped implication. The Princess de Conti was once in the happy position of being able to triumph over her sisters in this way. The other two had sent down to the Swiss guard with a request for pipes, as they wished to smoke and had none of their own. While the entertainment was in full swing the Dauphin suddenly appeared on the threshold. His amazement was only equalled by his terror that the smell of smoke would drift along the passages as far as the King's room. His fears were not vain. Louis smelt the profane odour in the sacred precincts of his apartments. He was almost unable to believe that any one would be bold enough to insult the King thus, and was doubly horrified to discover that the perpetrators of the deed were ladies of his own family. His anger quelled even the Mortemart spirit which the sisters had inherited from their haughty mother, and Madame de Conti, whose beautiful body was the abode of a spiteful mind, rejoiced at their discomfiture.

During the last years of Louis XIV.'s reign, the family circle had been supplemented by the promotion from the nursery of the Duc de Bourgogne's brother, Charles de Berri, and of Marie-Louise d'Orléans, daughter of the Duc de Chartres, now of Orleans, and one of the smokers mentioned above. These two children were married as soon as they were old enough, and the need of keeping fresh scandals from the King's ear became daily more pressing. In 1710 the Duchess, though only fifteen, had to be carried repeatedly from the table on account of her predilection for wine; and her outrageous conduct in other ways, in which she was encouraged by her doting father, shocked even that hardened

age. In natural affection she was entirely wanting, and her only concern was how she might "maintain the respect due to her" as the wife of a prince of the direct line. Even her mother was obliged to stand on ceremony with her. One morning Madame la Duchesse came to see her daughter at her *lever*. A new and nervous usher, not having grasped the minutiae of etiquette, opened both sides of the folding door instead of the one to which she was entitled. Madame de Berri turned red and trembled with fury at the sight. She treated her mother with scant courtesy, dismissed her as soon as possible, and then burst into tears of rage. The unfortunate servant was soundly rated, and all were made to feel that the "rights" of so important a person must not be tampered with.

Episodes of this nature were kept as much as possible from the old King's knowledge. All were waiting for him to die, and for the last vestiges of decorum to be buried with him, so that they might break out into an untrammelled life of licence. Louis himself was aware of this fact. Virtually his reign had ended with his personal prestige. On his deathbed he referred to that long-distant period "When I was King," and in that incoherent utterance is contained the cardinal truth from which depended the conditions of his last sad years. He was in fact no longer King. The younger generation could not rule until his death, but the interregnum of his decrepitude was all to their advantage, for it gave them time to mature their schemes. The past alone was his; but in their hands lay the whole eighteenth century as a toy to be treasured or broken. That the pretty mechanism would prove to be an explosive machine was the last possibility that occurred to them.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRIALS OF HOUSEKEEPING

THE chief vocation of a great noble was to acquire or maintain an advantageous position at Court, often at the cost of time and money, if not of probity and tired feet. In the royal Presence he showed himself obsequious, and when he took the lowest place it was in the hope of being asked to go up higher. He strove, in short, to prove himself a right deserving man. In his own house his conduct was very different. There he was master and not servant, and there he expected to be treated by his inferiors as the King was treated by his Court. A great establishment was but a reproduction, less brightly-coloured perhaps, of the royal household. Monsieur and madame each had a separate set of servants, of apartments and of friends; and although they met occasionally as acquaintances, the formality of their address to each other was calculated to impress less well-born beholders by its fine decorum. Domestic life in the modern sense of the word was difficult of achievement. It was a point of honour among the great to have their ante-rooms thronged with men of letters, poor artists, and every type of client, who spent hours in awaiting the passage of their patron. Provided also the house was full of servants in livery, and the coach-house with carriages, the master had little care for the quality of either. Madame viewed her crowded drawing-room with satisfaction, and sought to introduce even more visitors into it, in order to prove that her "credit" exceeded that of her neighbours. The more bustle and confusion there was in such a house, the greater the dignity of its master; the minor ambition to be well served was often forced to go to the wall. The splendour and discomfort of such a life were about equally



balanced. But the ideals of the seventeenth century are not ours, and many nobles who lived under these circumstances believed themselves to be leading a life of perfect comfort. The fact that the gravy was always congealed on the dish before it reached them was no hardship, inasmuch as it proved that the kitchen was a long way off, and that the dish passed through many hands before it arrived, cold and magnificent, at the lordly table.

The expenses of such a household were enormous. On the other hand every noble felt that he owed it to his position to make all the display possible. Hence the great prominence of the dowry question in marriage negotiations at this time. Marriage was a matter of mutual convenience. Birth and fortune were the chief considerations in choosing a wife; beauty was desirable though not essential; character and education were seldom enquired into. This being the case, it is surprising how happy were many marriages thus arranged. Constant visitors and the claims of a full social programme made it quite possible to live peaceably with a person one did not love. Few women expected to be adored like the heroine of a novel, and were consequently not disappointed when their husbands treated them with mere politeness or indifference. Some persons even believed love to be a thing of which to be ashamed. Mademoiselle de Vaudry used to blush scarlet if the word were mentioned, and the Grande Mademoiselle dismissed one of her maids "because she had married for love." Madame de Sévigné, though too reasonable a woman to hate love in general, was of opinion that only well-bred and agreeable people should be allowed the luxury of indulging in it. When a member of the Béthune family broke down a convent door with a log of wood in order to release Mademoiselle de Vaubrun, previous to running away with her, Madame de Sévigné wrote to her daughter: "What do you think of Love? I despise him when he amuses himself with such horrid people." Saint-Simon was equally ready to dispense with love in marriage. He relates that when the question of his marriage was

mooted, he could not point out any particular lady for whom he felt an inclination. He therefore determined to choose a family with whom connection would be desirable, and to rely upon the head of it to give him a suitable helpmeet from among his female relatives. He accordingly asked the Duc de Beauvilliers for one of his eight daughters, none of whom he had ever seen. "It was himself who had charmed me," confesses Saint-Simon, "and it was him I wished to marry, together with Madame de Beauvilliers."\*

Those who chose their wife simply for the sake of her fortune were usually unhappy. Madame de Sévigné's daughter wasted so much money in Provence that when the time came for her son to be married, the principal consideration in connection with it was the pecuniary one. He ended, therefore, by marrying the daughter of a rich *fermier-général*. The girl was of course not noble, and her mother-in-law, when introducing her to visitors, was wont to excuse her, and to say with a smile that even the best lands were occasionally in need of manure. No wonder that wives were often wretched when their husbands' mothers permitted themselves such remarks. Some well-born girls, on the other hand, were used by bourgeois lovers as stepping-stones to high places in society. Mademoiselle de Mailly, aged eleven, was affianced to one la Vrillière, who lived at Court although he had no employment there. On learning her fate "she began to cry, and to scream out that she was very unhappy; that her parents might give her a poor husband if they liked, but that he must be a gentleman and not a little tradesman anxious to make his fortune. She was in a fury with her mother and Madame de Maintenon. She could not be appeased nor silenced, nor prevented from making faces at la Vrillière and all his relations who flocked to see her. They quite understood what was happening, but the bargain was already made and it was too good a one to be broken." Saint-Simon adds that the bride never became used to her circumstances and disliked her husband to the end.

\* This match fell through.

Love is, however, a perennial plant, and flourishes in any age. Avarice and pride were not always the guiding principles determining every noble marriage in the seventeenth century. The Prince de Conti and Mademoiselle de Blois were entirely in love with each other. The King was charmed by the unwonted spectacle, and liked to tease the pair by proposing to postpone the wedding-day. In less exalted paths true lovers were also to be met at every turn. Arnauld d'Andilly early announced his refusal to marry any woman he did not love. "I know," said he, "that I am expressing a sentiment that is very unusual at this time, and which will be described as ridiculous by those who seek only money, but I am also well aware that such persons often expose themselves to something far worse than ridicule." How far d'Andilly carried his principles into practice it is difficult to say. At the age of twenty-four he married Mademoiselle de la Boderie, who was just fourteen. It is to be supposed that he was not greatly attracted by her, for he wrote rather desperately in his *Mémoires*: "As for Mademoiselle de la Boderie, who was then fourteen, I will content myself with saying that she had all the qualities which can make a person of that age amiable and estimable."

The actual process of wooing a lady was often very perfunctory. An aspirant for a lady's hand, say the books of etiquette, should flatter her moderately. "If her complexion be muddy, he shall say she is brown as were the beauties that the ancient world chiefly admired. If she has red hair, he will applaud the taste of the Italians, who like red hair. If she is too thin and small, she will be all the more agile and spritely. Too much fat will be described as buxomness. Too great height will constitute a regal figure or the dimensions of an Amazon. In short, he will endow every imperfection with the name of the perfection it most resembles." But courtship was a mere formality, and felt to be such by both parties. Its importance was, therefore, purely nominal, and many persons entering matrimony dispensed with it altogether.

Such, then, were the usual preliminaries of conjugal exist-



ence. Once married, husband and wife gravitated back again to their former habits. The pleasure-loving husband hunted, fought, and gambled. The frivolous wife entertained her friends and also gambled. In such cases the servants were usually left to themselves, with the result that even the largest fortunes were wasted in extravagance. Even with care the management of a great establishment was a very difficult task, and it is not surprising that girls married at the age of eleven were incapable of being good housekeepers. Everything was on a large and pompous scale. The Parisian house was usually a gloomy mansion, built in classic style, with a tiresome façade bursting here and there into Doric ornament or acanthus foliage. Inside, the impression was mathematically correct and as unimaginative as the multiplication table. A marble staircase flowed like a cascade into the central hall. Gilded mouldings adorned the walls, and Cupids holding torches flanked the balustrades. On the ceilings of the rooms, goddesses in red and yellow waved massive arms against a bright blue sky. All was heroic, allegorical, inhuman. The furniture was on the same scale : admirably made and florid with marquetry. At night the house was lighted by candles. At a reception the outer hall was lighted by means of torches held by a regiment of servants. It was the turbulence and number of the latter that constituted the real difficulty of housekeeping before the Revolution. The decorous butler and solemn footman deemed essential by the modern world were rarely to be met with in seventeenth-century Paris. So great was the demand for servants, that the master had neither time nor inclination to make enquiries as to the previous character of a man who presented himself for service. The result of this negligence was that numbers of men who preferred an adventurous to a quiet life hired themselves out as servants. They stayed in each situation long enough to steal what they could, and then passed on before they were detected. Their thieving propensities were largely due to the fact that the wages paid them were quite inadequate, and that frequently they were obliged to board themselves. The valets of Paris



were the terror of the police. In every murderous affray the watch was sure to trace the presence of a servant appertaining to some noble house. These pleasant rascals were, as a rule, faithful to the man they happened to call master at the moment, but even him they occasionally abandoned at a crisis. Their insolence was proverbial. Out-of-doors they threw all restraint to the winds and made a sport of insulting all who had the ill-luck to attract their attention. The long-nosed Cyrano de Bergerac, famous for his excellent sword-play, once taught a contingent of them a characteristic lesson. He was walking on the Pont-Neuf where a band of servants were playing with the monkey of a marionnette proprietor there stationed. "On beholding the countenance of Bergerac the liveried troupe burst out into sardonic laughter. One of them spun round the author's felt hat; another gay spark gave him a slap in the very middle of his face, exclaiming, 'Is that your everyday nose? What a devil of a nose! Pray step back a little—it shuts out all the view.' The owner of the nose, braver than Don Quixote de la Mancha, brandished his falchion against twenty or thirty armed aggressors, for the valets also wore swords. He pressed them so sharply that he drove them before him as a sheep-dog drives a flock of sheep."

Fights and even murders in cold blood became very frequent towards the middle of the century. The climax was reached when a valet attacked and killed M. de Tilladet, captain of the guard. A royal declaration was then issued, forbidding servants to carry arms. It was also enjoined upon all masters to dress their dependents in coloured liveries, instead of in grey as hitherto, so that if an affray took place, the servants involved in it might be the more readily recognised.

Blackguard and valet were not, however, always synonymous terms, and many faithful servants lived and died in the service of one master. Some even made his interests their own. One or two were as sensitive on a point of honour as the most high-born gentleman could be. Vatel, the Duc

de Condé's *chef*, is the historic example of this type of servant. The King arrived one Thursday night at Chantilly, and Vatel was greatly put to it to have an adequate repast for His Majesty. He strewed the hall with jonquils, and the food was abundant. But on two of the tables there was no roast meat. "I have lost my honour," cried Vatel; "this is an affront that I cannot endure." His friend Gourville proffered consolation and helped him to make further arrangements for the commissariat. Gourville, kind man, also confided to the Prince how much distressed his servant was at the absence of those two roasts. Condé at once went up to Vatel's room and said to him: "Vatel, everything is going well—never was seen so beautiful a supper as the King's." "Monseigneur," replied Vatel, "your kindness completes my confusion. I know there was no roast at two tables." "Not at all," said the Prince, "do not be anxious. Everything is admirable." Vatel was consoled, the Prince was satisfied, and the feast cost 16,000 francs. Vatel was, however, destined to fall a victim to his pride. The fish ordered from the coast failed to arrive at the desired time. Vatel waited a few hours, and then fell upon his sword rather than survive the disgrace of allowing his master to dine without fish. Thus Vatel retained his honour unblemished and Condé lost a valuable servant.

The post of cook in a large establishment is at no time a sinecure, but in the seventeenth century the labour it involved was enormous. It is true that there was little variety in the mode of preparing food, but the amount cooked was in proportion far greater than that consumed by the modern world. The quantity eaten by one person at a single meal was phenomenal. Louis XIV. habitually worked his way through menus such as the following: "Four full plates of different kinds of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a large plate of salad, two large slices of ham, mutton with gravy and garlic, a plate of pastry, some hard-boiled eggs and some fruit." One Friday, when he did not feel well enough to observe the day, he could only scrape up sufficient appetite to eat toast with

asparagus, pigeon 'potage,'\* and three roast spring chickens. In the evening he ate some soup and bread, but no meat. Being worse the next day, he only partook of "toast, game 'potage,' and three chickens, of which he ate, as on Friday, four wings, the breasts, and one leg." There were as a rule three or four courses or "services" at a banquet, and each course sometimes consisted of as many as 160 dishes. Many dishes, moreover, contained six or seven different kinds of food. So wild had become the extravagance of caterers for great dinners, that in 1629 a sumptuary ordinance was passed, forbidding cooks to place more than six different kinds of meat on the same platter. The appearance of a dinner-table must have been very remarkable. Large plates heaped with sodden lumps of meat alternated with others on which lay a jumble of game and fowls. Enormous pies reared their castellated heads from among humbler receptacles containing mince. Bowls of peas, at that time very expensive, filled up the interstices. Bacon and peas constituted a favourite seventeenth-century dish, and fish stuffed with vegetables and encased in pastry fried in oil was also much appreciated by gourmets. Salted whale's tongue was eaten at the beginning of the century, and all through it *bouillie* made of flour, milk and honey, was a standing dish.

The art of cooking itself was still in its adolescence. Everything was overdone, and few things were eaten unadulterated with others. Spice, though less used than in the sixteenth century, was still a frequent ingredient. Partridges, ducks and pigeons were sometimes boiled together and seasoned with musk, ginger, pepper, thyme and other herbs. Dried roses appeared in some savoury dishes, and the use of rose-water was almost inevitable in the making of sauces. Scented powders were also freely sprinkled on roast meat, and minces were mixed with sweet foods. One "potage," for instance, consisted of butcher's meat or chicken very finely hashed and "distilled into an alembic with pearl barley, dried roses, cinnamon, coriander seed and Damascene raisins."

\* Potage = meat or fish cooked with vegetables.



One of the chief complaints levelled at the fashionable world by seventeenth-century moralists is that it wasted time and dissipated energy in lolling on sofas and imbibing enervating drinks. Drunkenness was so long established a vice that reformers fulminated against it more or less from habit. Coffee, tea, chocolate were newcomers and foreigners, and as such viewed with suspicion by the stricter nationalists. Tea first appeared in the capital in 1636, where it was experimented with in various ways. Madame de Sablé drank it with milk. Some persons smoked it in pipes. Some drank it because it was fashionable, others because it was believed to confer intelligence on the stupid. Chocolate made its appearance with Maria Theresa. The prevalent antagonism to Spanish habits did not operate with regard to this particular food, and in 1671 we find Madame de Sévigné strongly urging her daughter to drink it on account of its nourishing properties. Its popularity was of short duration. Soon after the Marquise's first letter there followed a second, containing a condemnation of the harmless beverage. "I wish to tell you, my dear child, that chocolate does not enjoy the favour it once had in my estimation. Fashion drew me on, as it always does. All who once sang its praises to me now find fault with it. They curse it, they accuse it of causing all the ills to which we are heir. It is the source of all vapours and palpitations. It gratifies you for a time, and then suddenly kindles in you a fever which brings you to your death. In God's name, do not pledge yourself to countenance the stuff, and reflect that to do so is no longer 'smart.'"

The chief summer drink was lemonade flavoured with rose-water. Ices owed their introduction to an Italian about 1600, and were made by only three firms in Paris. Violets, orange-blossoms, jasmine, roses, fennel and lettuce stumps were usually preserved at home. Fruit was largely cultivated. Bonnefon's *Jardinier* mentions 316 different kinds of pears, but only fifteen of apples. There were only four kinds of strawberries, and two of gooseberries. Melons were still the favourite fruit in France. At banquets it was



customary to decorate the table with a high pyramid of fruit erected on a framework and then carefully placed on the middle of the table. Its transport into the dining-room was often attended by disastrous results. Madame de Sévigné once beheld such a catastrophe at a dinner in Brittany. She thus describes the episode: "A pyramid wishes to enter: one of those pyramids which make it impossible to communicate except by letter with those at the other end of the table. But here, far from being annoyed by them, one is only too glad to be prevented from looking at the view they obscure. This pyramid, then, with twenty or thirty china dishes on it, was so entirely upset at the door, that the noise silenced the violins and hautboys and the trumpets."

The expenses of the kitchen and the stable were, however, as nothing in comparison with those of the wardrobe and the wig closet. In vain was edict after edict issued to forbid the use of cloth-of-gold and of excessive silk embroidery. The Court treated such legislation with complete disregard. Indeed in Louis XIV.'s reign it was exempt from obedience to such laws; and towards the end of the century the sums expended on dress were incredibly high.

In Henri IV.'s time, male costume consisted of a tight doublet, plain breeches, short Spanish cape, an enormous turned-down collar, and a high hat with a feather. Soon the latter was replaced by a low felt hat without a feather, and the doublet reached that point in evolution when it became long enough to be termed a coat. Accessories such as scarves, gaiters, and huge ribbon rosettes became the distinguishing marks of a well-dressed man. Women wore tight stiff skirts over which was festooned another skirt extended on small hoops. The bodice was like an iron cage running to a point in front, and the sleeves were stuffed from shoulder to elbow with something of the nature of cotton-wool. A large lace collar was also worn, and perfumed gloves completed the attire. With the accession of Louis XIII. several important changes took place in dress. Breeches gradually became wider, boots more imposing.

"Above all," writes a fashion-monger a few years later, "one must follow the fashion. I do not mean that set by one or two fops at Court who, in order to cut a figure, now bury half their body in enormous boots, now plunge themselves up to the armpits into high breeches, now drown their faces in a hat with a brim as large as an Italian sunshade." Snobs went booted to persuade others they owned a horse. "It is necessary for men of worth," says Sorel, "to wear them in order to show what they are, just as other men wear them in order to appear to be what they are not. If one dresses in black, people take one for a sober citizen; if one wears colours, one is taken for a fiddler or a boatman, especially if one wears silk stockings of different colours; but the wearing of boots routs all such suppositions, for they enrich every style of dress."

After the Fronde (when all dressed in neutral colours), dress became more sumptuous again. On Mazarin's death Louis XIV. reverted to his natural tastes, which were elegant, and although in later years he wore very plain clothes, the Court was encouraged to expend great sums on dress. Lace was an important item in the yearly expenditure of a great noble. Foreign lace-makers were invited to set up their workshops in France, and native industry was greatly encouraged. It was said that Madame de Puysieux wasted 100,000 écus a year by her habit of biting the lace round her cap and sleeves. Fashions became more and more ridiculous. The costume in which Molière acted *Mascarille*, though exaggerated, was not markedly so. Many a young nobleman beheld his own portrait in the parody. "His wig was so large that it swept the floor every time he bowed, and his hat so small that it was easy to see that he carried it more often in his hand than on his head. His collar was nothing more nor less than an honest dressing-wrap, and the lace and ribbon round his knees seemed made for nothing else than to serve as a screen for children playing hide-and-seek round his legs. . . . Strips of braid emerged from his pocket as from a cornucopia, and his shoes were so entirely covered with

ribbons that I cannot tell you whether they were of English or Russian morocco leather. But I *do* know that they were six inches off the ground, and that I was very curious to know how heels so high and so much attenuated could support the weight of the marquis's body, his ribbons, his laces, and his powder." Feminine costume became more intricate in outline as well as more magnificent. Taffetas, worn in Louis XIII.'s reign, was in his son's later days thought bourgeois. Velvet alone satisfied the Court. Cloth-of-gold was also worn at Court, although elsewhere it was nominally prohibited.

The hairdresser was, throughout the seventeenth century, one of the essential pillars of society. It was the premature baldness of Louis XIII. that made the fortune of the trade. Having lost his hair before he was thirty, the King began to wear a wig, and all good courtiers naturally followed his example. Off came the long curls called moustaches or cadenettes,\* which hung down behind the ears, and crimped wigs, sometimes having slits so that the wearer's own hair might be pulled through, were worn instead. The cadenettes did not, however, quite lose their hold, and might still be seen even as late as the middle of the century. Louis XIV. himself wore them in his youth. His own hair was so thick, and his dislike for wigs and powder so great, that he did not begin to use them till 1673. The triumph of the wig was solemnised by the creation of the fraternity of "Barbiers barbants." The largest types of wigs were those known as "la Royale" and "l'Infolio." These often weighed 2 lbs., and cost from 2500 to 3000 francs. A fair wig, if good, was worth 1000 écus. Women's hair fetched 150 livres an ounce. In summer the heat made the wearing of wigs almost unendurable.

The dressing of women's hair presented an even more difficult problem, because, curiously enough, there were few hairdressers in the earlier part of the century who made a

\* So called after the Seigneur de Cadenet, the brother of de Luynes, who wore his fair hair plaited, tied with coloured ribbon, and hanging over his left shoulder.



speciality of this branch of their art. The first ladies' coiffeur was a man named Champagne. This person, knowing himself to be indispensable, played the great lord, and treated his customers with astonishing insolence. On his death in 1658, the trade passed into the hands of a few women. Madame de Sévigné patronised one La Martine, the inventor of the coiffure hurluberlu or hurlupée. Hair thus done was cut so that it might be arranged in tight curls towering in several tiers from the ears to the top of the head. In 1671, the year of this invention, Madame de Sévigné warns her daughter against countenancing so ridiculous a fashion, but suggests that she might nevertheless change the mode of her head-dress for something a little more simple. "There is," says the Marquise, "a fashion of parting the hair like a peasant, and wearing it in two bunches of curls," which might suit Madame de Grignan. At all events, she will have a doll's hair thus arranged and sent for her inspection. The only drawback is that the hair must be cut into different lengths. "It is now the fashion," she concludes, "to wear one's hair like a baby's. It is done in a moment. It is a far cry from this fashion to that of your ladies (*i.e.*, in the south), whose heads are greased with pomatum, and who wear the united hair of two parishes; *they* are well out of the fashion." The coiffure à la Fontanges consisted of hair loosely coiled on to the head. Round it was tied a piece of ribbon, in such a way that the ends hung down over the forehead. Mademoiselle de Fontanges once tied her hair up thus when her head-dress was blown away at a hunting party. The fashion spread. Later on a piece of wired lace, which in its turn developed into a cap, was added to the ribbon, until finally the structure reached a height of two feet. In vain did the King inveigh against this fashion, which struck him as extravagant. The glory of reintroducing low head-dresses was left to the Countess of Shrewsbury, who in 1713 succeeded where the great King himself had failed.

Besides wigs and false hair, powder and patches were necessary for the equipment of the Belinda of the day.



Patches were worn even by bourgeois and working women. Their original function was to act as "a tiny little plaster" to put on over a pimple. They were made of black silk or velvet. Round patches were called "assassins"; those worn by the nose were "the brazen"; those by the mouth were "the kisser"; the patch in the middle of the cheek was "the gallant"; that by the lower lip was "the discreet"; that by a dimple was "the sprightly"; finally, the patch on the forehead was "the majestic."\* The *Patchmaker*, printed by M. Fournier, gives a spirited description of all these types of patches, and urges the fair lady to wear them even to church, whatever the curé may say. The clergy especially preached against powder and patches; some of them also rebuked their female parishioners for pulling out their eyebrows in order to "make their faces more gentle."

The daily round of a person of quality began at any time between seven and ten o'clock. Dressing occupied several hours. To take a bath was to confess oneself ill. Louis XIV. never did so unless it was prescribed by his physician, and then he stayed in it about two hours. River bathing was more frequent. The Grande Mademoiselle was greatly addicted to it, and it is said that Henrietta of England hastened her death by bathing when she already had a chill. A certain Madame de Saint-Herem† used to bathe in the Seine near Fontainebleau. When the water was unusually cold, it was her habit to have boiling water poured over her in the river. On one occasion she was scalded before the hot water had time to mix with the stream.

Having attended mass and breakfasted in her bedroom,

\* "Vous avez beau être frisée  
Par anneaux tombant sur le sein  
Sans un amoureux assassin  
Vous ne serez guère prisée." (Quoted by TALLEMANT.)

† Madame de Saint-Herem was a lady greatly terrified by thunder. During thunderstorms she was wont to lie under her great bed, while her maids lay in heaps on it, so that if it were struck by lightning they might be killed first.

the fine lady sat in front of her dressing-table while her maids curled her hair. Friends, both men and women, trooped in to converse with her. The first set meal was dinner, which, being the principal one of the day, was a solemn and quasi-religious function. This heavy banquet was, at the beginning of the period, fixed at 10 A.M., but the hour advanced with the century, so that by 1715 or a little later, two was the fashionable dinner-time. In Louis XIV.'s reign twelve was the usual hour, although the courtiers dined at one, in order to be present at the King's dinner. The growing tendency to put off the meal till one was viewed with disfavour by persons such as Madame de Sévigné, who had been brought up to earlier habits. At 12.30 she was always desperately hungry. Once when dining with the Governor of Brittany, M. de Chaulnes, her appetite led her to make a strange mistake. "I saw before dinner," she writes, "standing at the end of the room, a man whom I took to be the butler. I went to him and said: 'My poor sir, do have dinner served. It is one o'clock and I am dying of hunger.' The man looked at me and said: 'Madame, would I might have the happiness of offering you dinner at my table—my name is Pécaudière, my house is only two miles from Landerneau.' My child, it was a gentleman from Lower Brittany. What I looked like at that moment it is not given to words to describe. I laugh at it even now as I tell it to you." Vichy, 6th September 1671.

Supper was at seven, in spite of the laments of a doctor named Gontier, who wrote a curious book on the preservation of health, in which he quotes a salutary old song:—

"Rise at six, dine at ten  
Sup at six, bed at ten  
Makes man live till ten times ten."

On fast days, before a ferial, there was also a meal called *Médianoche*, at midnight, as the name implies.

The day was chiefly spent in visiting and being visited

both according to a very complicated system of procedure. Of all works on etiquette, that of Antoine Courtin, written about 1675, is the most delightful. This worthy gentleman composed his book at the request of a country squire about to send his son to Court. The cardinal precept insisted upon by Courtin is constantly to bear in mind the exact rank of the persons with whom one is dealing. To be "wanting in respect" is the unpardonable sin. The path of the neophyte herein was beset with deep pitfalls. How should a man comport himself in the presence of *two* great persons of equal rank? What must he do when suddenly confronted with people slightly inferior in rank while walking with people slightly above himself? Courtin, however, foresaw everything and provided for almost every emergency. Suppose, for instance, that you are walking up and down a path with two great lords to whom you are relating an anecdote. The middle is the place of honour, which is equally due to them both. But at this moment the narrator, though an inferior, occupies it, so that both pairs of noble ears may hear the tale with ease. So far, so good. But it is his conduct when the moment has come for turning that is the crucial test of the inferior's breeding. A well-bred person will turn his back *alternately* on the two great lords. Courtin does not say on which the neophyte must first turn his inferior back, nor what is to be done if the number of turns be an unequal one. The only further injunction given is this: if the other men be the narrator's equals, they must in turn walk in the middle.

The presence of an inferior, especially of an inferior lady, necessitates even greater delicacy. Should you meet inferior ladies while out walking with a superior gentlewoman, remember that "it is incivil to bow to them, because it is an insult to their superior to treat them as her equal." Should you meet a man who is your superior, bow so low that your hand touches the ground. "But, above all, this bow must not be made hastily or awkwardly; raise yourself again slowly," lest the other man's head should strike against yours. If he be a very great noble, embrace his thighs without more



ado. If out with him, walk a few steps behind him, and remove your hat every time he addresses you. Great men, should, however, be considerate and avoid crossing the gutter as much as possible, in order not to "incommode [their inferiors] by forcing them to manœuvre and revolve incessantly round them so as to leave them the place of honour" (*i.e.*, the side furthest from the road).

The fine art of paying visits was a highly complicated one. The first thing to be considered, says Courtin, is the question of dress. The best course for the neophyte to pursue in this matter is to select a courtier who is a good Christian as a model, and then to imitate the cut of his clothes as nearly as possible. Do not wear anything exaggerated. Do not wear a hat so large that people behold in you merely a hat walking upon two legs. Do not forget to wash your hands at least once a day, and your face also, if possible. Then, with clean boots and a nicely curled wig, set out for the house you intend to visit. Give one knock on the outside of the door, but when once inside, be careful only to scratch with your nail on the doors of the rooms. Remember also that "it is impertinent to enter the rooms of a house quite unannounced if one is a perfect stranger there." When in the presence of your host and hostess, sit so that they see you only in profile, for to stare straight at the persons you are addressing is rude. If startled or grieved, do not tear your hair out; if tired, do not throw yourself upon the bed. Should another visitor happen to sneeze, do not say out loud to him "God help you," but take off your hat (should it happen to be on) and make the prayer in silence; for, says Erasmus, "it is a religious practice to bow to him who sneezes." If you yourself wish to sneeze, do it gently, and "not like certain people who shake the house to its foundations."

A man's behaviour in the presence of women must be very guarded. "No gentleman should kiss a lady unexpectedly, snatch off her cap, her neckhandkerchief, her bracelet, or a ribbon to wear as a favour or to pin on in order to give people the idea that he is madly in love with her.



Nor must he carry away a lady's letters or books, nor read her private tablets. Such behaviour would be a sign of great familiarity. . . . It is also very indecent to take off one's cloak, one's wig, or one's coat, or to mend one's garter in public." With regard to kissing women—a frequent custom under Henri IV. and Louis XIII.—Courtin adds that in visiting a lady of very great position, "You must refrain from kissing her out of respect, and even if she should hold out her cheek out of politeness, you must only pretend to kiss her, by putting your face close to her head-dress." Above all, do not be a bore. "It is ridiculous, in speaking to a man, to seize him by his buttons, the ornaments on his coat, his belt or his cloak, or to dig him in the stomach. A very diverting spectacle is often occasioned by such conduct. He who feels himself pushed and pulled, backs towards the wall, and his interlocutor, quite unconscious of his own rudeness, pursues and corners him so that the victim is forced to cry for quarter." When you rise to take your departure, your host will perhaps accompany you to the door. If he does so, do not enter your carriage until he has again disappeared into the house. If he insists on seeing you start, "you must go away on foot and let the coach, etc., follow you until you are out of sight of the other person."

The conduct proper at meals is very carefully described by Courtin. A man must wear his hat at dinner, but must refrain from putting it on until he has taken his place. The food to be passed round must be put on a clean plate; it is not, for instance, polite to extend a slice of mutton on the end of a fork or knife to the person for whom it is intended. In fact, it is better to touch nothing except with a fork. Do not blow upon your food, do not throw what you cannot eat upon the floor, do not drink straight out of the soup tureen. To lick your knife or your fingers is "the height of impropriety. . . . It is also necessary to wipe your spoon if, after having used it, you wish to help yourself to something out of another dish, as there are people so particular that it would disgust them to eat the soup into which you had dipped your

spoon after taking it out of your mouth. . . . Indeed, in many houses nowadays, spoons are provided for each dish, and are only used to serve the soup or sauce."

Entertainment at weddings was a source of great expense, though the custom of giving wedding presents was not as yet wide-spread. As a rule the guests had spent so much on their clothes that they had little left wherewith to buy presents. The compliment implied in a splendid wedding garment was more appreciated than even a costly gift. At the marriage of Mademoiselle de Louvois with the son of the Prince de Marsillac, no cloth-of-gold was used of a lesser price than twenty louis the yard. This piece of information is furnished by Madame de Sévigné, who was present at and greatly entertained by the wedding. "What shall I say?" writes she. "Magnificence, illumination, all France, dresses brocaded and overlaid with gold: precious stones, braziers full of fire and of flowers, confusion of coaches, shouts in the street, lighted torches, hasty retreats on the part of people threatened by the wheels; in short, a whirlwind, dissipation, questions without answers, compliments without knowing what one is saying, civilities without knowing to whom one is speaking, feet tangled up in other women's trains . . . O vanity of vanities!"

The authoress of this dissertation on empty show was, however, far from feeling herself at all times on the brink of a precipice, though she was as pleased to dabble in Jansenism as she was to gossip in the most engaging manner about the pageant of human life. Madame de Sévigné was, of all the great ladies of her time, the most *complete*, although she inclined far more towards the admirable than most of them. She loved beauty and "the glory of the world" as much as the notorious Brinvilliers, whose execution she witnessed with so much self-possession. Not even Madame de Montespan took a profounder interest in fashions and rich stuffs. She loved the theatre, she loved fine dinner tables decked with old glass, she loved good sermons. Above all, she loved a well-bred conversation. Her desire was to "hear new things

and see what pleases the eye," but she did not for all that "disdain what is humble and insignificant." Everything was to her a source of wholesome amusement. "I hate dulness more than death," was her constant exclamation. She would rather see a stupid play than none at all, although her judgment in literature was admirable. The slight *précieux* tendency in her style was, as it were, merely a tradition of her youth, and in no way savoured of affectation. The days of the Fronde were the great days of her life, and its opinions held her to the end. Hence her inclination to rate Corneille above Racine, to prefer the youthful stirrings of untrammelled genius to the maturer perfections which characterised the middle period of the great reign.

Grief and bodily pain were not strong enough to quell her gaiety. Like those heroines of Corneille whom she so much admired, she was governed by intelligence rather than by feeling or imagination. The result was that she was never moody nor spiteful, nor even "petulant with God." She was, in short, very human and very happy. Even the separation from her daughter had its pleasant and artistic aspect. It furnished her with all the ingredients necessary for a first-rate correspondence. Never were letters more amusing, more acute, more generously communicative than hers. "Good friends," said she, "should let their pens trot as they like. As for mine, it always takes the bit between its teeth." Her mind apparently did the same. It fled headlong from the conventional, tasted and handled problems without being biassed by preconceived ideas, refused to accept the standard imposed by the world. Madame de Sévigné tells us, for instance, that she neither can nor will pretend to be shocked by things which do not appear to her to be shocking. In consequence we find her encouraging her son to read Rabelais aloud to her, while at the same time she is piously directing the movements of the architect building her chapel. In matters of religion she dwelt within the bounds of orthodoxy, though not without permitting herself excursions into forbidden territory if she there sighted anything that promised to be



interesting. The books of the Calvinist Abadie were read and recommended by the Marquise. Her cousin Bussy and even her little grandchild Pauline were incited to read *Le Traité de la Vérité de la Religion chrétienne*. "It is," she said, "the most divine of books. Many people think with me on the subject. I do not think that any one has ever spoken of religion as this man does. . . . We owe a great debt to [him] for having removed all our miserable doubts. One is ashamed of not having oneself thought of the things he says." Madame de Sévigné admired "devotion" at a distance. She had a profound respect for religion, and cherished a lurking sense that she ought to be devout: but the prospect of seriously becoming a *dévot*e wearied her. "One of my greatest ambitions," she writes to her daughter "is to be devout. I torment La Mousse\* about it day after day. I belong neither to God nor to the devil, and to be in such a state worries me, although, between ourselves, I think it a very natural one. One does not give oneself to the devil because one fears God, and because in one's heart of hearts there lies after all a germ of religion. On the other hand, one has not given oneself to God because His law seems hard and one shrinks from destroying oneself. This [dilemma] gives birth to the race of the lukewarm, the number of which in no way surprises me. I appreciate their reasons: nevertheless God hates them. One must therefore leave their ranks: and it is just in doing this that lies the difficulty."

In speaking of death Madame de Sévigné feels greater assurance. "God has given me a substratum of religion which enables me to contemplate this last action of our lives with a certain degree of perseverance." But she was a healthy woman, death was not imminent, her friends were numerous and her houses convenient. Madame de Sévigné was therefore greatly contented with life. No comfortable cat before a warm fire was more inclined to purring than she to cheerfulness. The Marquis, her husband, had left her a widow with a son and a daughter while still in the prime of her youth.

\* An abbé related to Madame de Sévigné.



On her daughter's marriage with M. de Grignan, Lieutenant-Governor of Provence, most of her time was spent at Les Rochers near Vitré, at Livry, or after 1677 at the pretty house in Paris known to us as the Hôtel Carnavalet. Frequent visits were made to friends of every description. With the frivolous she gossiped; with the serious she discussed theology. At Pomponne, in 1671, she argued for six hours with Arnauld d'Andilly, who would have enjoyed nothing so much as converting the Marquise to Jansenism, or indeed any permanently serious frame of mind. "You are," said he, "a pretty pagan, and mad not to be converted." But her favourite abiding-place was certainly her quiet house in the middle of the Breton fields. Madame de Sévigné again departed from convention in sincerely enjoying country life. Time after time she speaks in her letters of—

"The fresh earth with new leaves dressed  
And the starry night."

"I came here," she writes, "where I found the triumph of the month of May in full swing: the nightingale, the cuckoo and the warbler introduce the spring into our forests." Again she tells us that she writes at a table out of doors and is almost deafened by the singing of four robins in the tree over her head. Even her rheumatism would not keep her in-doors in damp weather, and she confesses that when passing a window from which she can see the moonlit garden, she is obliged to shut her eyes: otherwise the temptation to go out would be too strong.

Life at Livry was not entirely uneventful. Visitors came and went. People made excursions from Paris and Rennes on purpose to enjoy a little admirable conversation with the mistress of the house. Passing bishops and magistrates asked for hospitality. "To-day," writes Madame de Sévigné on 20th August 1671, "I expect M. de Rennes and three other bishops to dinner. I shall give them a piece of salt beef." The neighbouring gentry, dull and provincial though they were, received due entertainment. The temptation to laugh at their follies was a strong one. Much amuse-

ment was afforded Madame de Sévigné by one Mademoiselle de Croqueoison, who complained bitterly of one Mademoiselle de Cerni who had in her turn complained that she had been overlooked in the distribution of sweet oranges at a recent ball. The name *Mademoiselle de Kerborgne*, especially attracted the Marquise, and it was to provide a pendant for it that she nicknamed her chief bugbear, Mademoiselle de Plessis, Mademoiselle de Kerbuche. "These names," said she "rejoice me." Mademoiselle du Plessis was a very trying person. "She honours us often with her presence," writes Madame de Sévigné. "She was saying yesterday at dinner that in Lower Brittany the food was excellent and plentiful, and that at the wedding of her sister-in-law the party had consumed twelve hundred pieces of roast meat in one day. We all sat like stone images. I took courage and said: 'Are you quite sure, mademoiselle? Do you not mean *twelve* pieces of roast meat? Every one is liable to make mistakes.' 'No, madame; there were twelve hundred—or perhaps eleven hundred—I will not be positive whether there were eleven or twelve, for fear of being untruthful, but I do know that it was one or other of those numbers.' And," continues the Marquise, "she repeated the statement twenty times, and would not even let us off a single chicken."

A more entertaining guest was the little girl whom Charles de Sévigné, Madame de Grignan's brother, proposed to marry. The household in Provence was apprised of the existence of this young person in the following letter: "We are turning over in our minds a very pretty thing in the way of marriages, but which is not as yet mature. The fair one is only fifteen. It is a pretty little puss and amuses us very much. I wish you could have seen this young person eat a large slab of bread and butter in the morning, and two green apples and some brown bread after dinner! Her simplicity and her pretty face are delightful after the rigidity and affectation of Mademoiselle du Plessis."

"To prove to you the antiquity and the capacity of the little person staying here [I will tell you that] she has just

assured us that the eve of Easter Day is a Tuesday ; then she corrected herself and said, 'It's a Monday.' But seeing that this did not seem to be right, she exclaimed, 'Heavens, how stupid I am ! it's a Friday !' And that is where we are now. If you would have the goodness to send us word which day *you* opine it to be, you would set our minds greatly at rest."

On the whole, however, Madame de Sévigné preferred the untrammelled freedom of solitude to even the most entertaining society. While away for a few days she writes : "I hardly dare to go back to Les Rochers ; people have begun to find their way thither. I am dying of longing to return to my solitude" (2nd September 1671). Even the arrival of news was felt to be an intrusion breaking in upon the even tenor of her thoughts. "I should like," she writes, "to be in Paris so as not to hear people constantly talking of *news*. If only I were able to take vengeance on the Bretons here for the cruelty of my friends, I should have patience. But they spend six months in revolving unweariedly round a piece of news from Court, and in contemplating it from every point of view. I, on the other hand, have still some small shreds of the *bel air* about me, which make me a little *précieuse*, and therefore easily tired of a thing. . . . People pity us in Paris, and think that we are languishing in our inglenooks, dying of boredom and never seeing daylight ; but I go for walks, and amuse myself. These woods have nothing alarming in them, and it is not of being here that one ought to complain."

The daily round at Les Rochers was a peaceful one. Madame de Sévigné rose at eight and went at once for an hour's walk in the woods. After the nine o'clock Mass she completed her toilet, wished the household good-morning, and then went to work in the garden. There she gathered fruit and flowers, and even held up small trees while the gardener planted them. The twelve o'clock dinner was followed by conversation and pleasant reading aloud. At five, the mistress of the house went out again into the

woods and fields, followed by one servant who carried for her certain books of devotion or of history. These she enjoyed on some secluded seat in the sun. Her placid meditations were, she tells us, on God, on the keeping of her own soul in patience, on the future. The eight o'clock supper bell brought her back, reluctant, to the duties of hostess. On her way through the old flower-garden she collected her guests who there awaited her in the green twilight, and the beruffled company flitted out of the dusk into the cheerful candlelight within. Conversation and jesting occupied the evening.

"Then, told the tales, to bed they creep  
By rocking winds soon lulled to sleep."

When quite alone Madame de Sévigné spent nearly the whole day out of doors. In 1675 she writes: "Saint Martin's summer continues, and I take very long walks. As I do not understand the use of arm-chairs, I rest in our avenues. I spend whole days in them quite alone with a footman, and I only come back long after nightfall. I dread blindman's holiday when one cannot talk, and I prefer being alone in the woods to solitude in my own chamber. This might be called 'flinging oneself into the water for fear of the rain,' but I can better accustom myself to the great silence out of doors than to the dulness of sitting in an arm-chair."

The care of her estates also served to occupy Madame de Sévigné. In November she was very busy. "I am amusing myself," she tells Madame de Grignan, "by having the big trees cut down." Her description of the commotion thereby occasioned reminds one of those great pieces of tapestry in which the "Labours of winter" are portrayed. "The trees being felled, the men sawing, some cutting the wood into logs, others loading them into carts, and I in the middle: that is the picture. Now I shall begin to plant, for what is one to do at Les Rochers, if one does not plant things?"

Next to her daughter, Madame de Sévigné loved her son, with whom she was wont to enjoy many a pass of arms in



a contest of wit. He began, like other young men of his period, by falling into debt and loving the great Ninon de l'Enclos, whom his father before him and his nephew after him vehemently loved. His mother had great difficulty in keeping him supplied with money and equipages. "The farmers," she writes in 1672, "do not pay. One does not dare to coin false money; one does not want to sell oneself to Satan, yet every one goes to the army with a carriage." Charles was without malice, and at heart high-principled. His visits to Les Rochers were frequent. About 1684, however, he began to take life more seriously. "Charles' latest whim," writes his mother, "is to pay all his debts." His clothes became simpler, his conduct more rigid. Finally, he became *dévot*. Charles was a true chip of the old block, whence had been hewn his great-grandmother, Sainte Jeanne Chantal. It was to this young man that Madame de Sévigné preferred to address her remarks on literature. Their tastes were not identical, but the slight divergence in their judgment gave flavour to the conversation. The number of books read aloud by Charles to his mother must have been as large as it was varied. Once we even hear of his "sitting in a copse enthroned on a mound of turf, reciting a whole scene of *Mithridate*." This seems to have pleased his mother; La Calprenède's novels did not. "My son," writes she, "put me into a fury by coming and reading an idiotic book in my presence. The work I mean is *Pharamond*. He forces me to leave my serious books, and on the pretext that I am spoiling my eyes, he compels me to listen to a string of foolish stories I would much rather forget." La Calprenède succeeded, however, in making sufficient impression on the lady to draw from her a confession that she "loved" the wild plots of his stories. It was his style that roused her ire. This style, in her opinion, lent itself to parody; and to parody it, when writing to her son, was for a time one of Madame de Sévigné's literary amusements.

The Corneillian novelist was at one time the chief bone of amicable contention. At another period it was round

Nicole's *Essais de Morale* that the discussion raged. The opinion of the Marquise was soon formed. "I am following up Nicole's moral teaching," she writes in 1671. "It has not as yet provided me with a philosophy strong enough to annihilate the rain, but I daily expect to happen upon such an one, for I find everything in it, and conformity to the will of God would suffice for me if I could only cease to desire a specific remedy." [The weather was very wet.] "In short, I think the book admirable; no one has ever written as those gentlemen do,\* for I am convinced that Pascal is responsible for half those among their works that are beautiful. One loves to hear oneself and one's sentiments discussed; so much so indeed that even when evil is said of both, one is delighted. I even forgave the phrase, 'Swelling of the heart,' in favour of the rest, and I maintain that no other word could so well convey the idea of vanity and pride, which appertain, after all, to the domain of the wind. Try to find another word if you can. . . . We are also reading a history of France from King John. I want to disentangle the facts in my head, and to be at least as clear about it as I am about Roman history, in which neither my relations nor my friends have figured. For devotional reading we have some letters of M. de Saint-Cyran, which M. d'Andilly will send you, and which you will greatly appreciate."

Madame de Grignan also read and admired the *Morale*. Charles was, however, of another opinion, and his mother's and sister's view of it was at once called into question by that most superior young man. "As for the *Essais de Morale*," he writes, "I very humbly beg your pardon, preparatory to telling you that the *Treatise on the Knowledge of Oneself* seems to me distilled, sophisticated, even gibberish in some places; above all, dull almost from cover to cover. But how can you attempt to compare the style of Port-Royal with that of Pascal? His is a style that makes all others seem repulsive. Monsieur Nicole crowds a number of fine words into his [sentences], and thereby tires and

\* The Solitaries of Port-Royal.

disgusts one in the long run. It is just like eating too much blanc-mange. This, then, is my opinion. In order to propitiate you, I will tell you that Montaigne has made it up with me on many points. I think some chapters admirable, inimitable, and others puerile and extravagant, and this I cannot deny. I exhort you when you have finished Josephus to try a certain Moral Treatise by Plutarch, which has for its title, *How to distinguish between the friend and the flatterer.*'"

Madame de Sévigné herself seems to have read everything obtainable, and to have admired wherever possible. But on the whole she was conservative in her tastes, and preferred the books of her youth to those she considered new-fangled. "I read my old books," she says. "I know of nothing new that tempts me." Homer, Tasso, Josephus, Guicciardini, *The Fables of Æsop*, a *History of the Eastern Emperors*, a *Book of Travels*, a *History of the English Reformation*, all these are mentioned as having been read and enjoyed. Of Montaigne, Madame de Sévigné thought very highly. "What a delightful man!" she exclaims. "What good company he is! He is my friend of long standing, old enough indeed to seem to me quite new." Among modern books she selected the works of Molinos and the *Chrétien intérieur* printed by Bernières. Her favourite novel was *La Princesse de Clèves*. "It is," she says, "a little book which strikes me as being one of the most charming things I have ever read."

Though so learned and discerning a student of life, the Marquise was no blue-stocking. Dress interested her remarkably. In 1671 she announces a new purchase. "I have bought for an indoor dress a material like your last petticoat. It is splendid stuff. There is in it a little green, but violet is the primary tint. In a word, I succumbed to it. They wanted to line it for me with flame-colour, but I thought that would suggest final impenitence. The outside is frailty pure and simple, but such an inside would have betokened a determined act of volition, which seemed to me immoral. I

therefore fall back upon a white taffetas lining." Sleeves were a problem to her, for either they must be small and ugly, or else large and inconvenient. "The sleeves of *le chevalier*," she writes, "cut a very pretty figure at table, although they bowl everything over, and I do not doubt that they will end by bowling me over too. Whatever weakness I may have for fashion, I have a great aversion to this dirty habit."

Madame de Sévigné's greatest pleasure in life was the arrival of a letter from her daughter, on whom she lavished an adoration stronger than that heartless lady deserved. Madame de Grignan was cool, self-possessed, prepared to enjoy the gifts of fortune and of circumstance. She had, moreover, a husband and children, and plenty of duties to occupy her time. No wonder then that the brunt of the correspondence was borne by the mother. The interest taken by the latter in the circumstances, neighbours and events described by her daughter is not only touching; it also testifies to a pictorial imagination of a very high order. Madame de Grignan complained of being obliged to endure the society of her husband's tiresome relations, and her mother immediately replied, "You seem to have Grignans in very large numbers on your hands. May Heaven deliver you from the aunt. She bores me from here." The diocesan, M. de Capentras, was also a pompous and fatiguing visitor, whom Madame de Grignan trembled at having to entertain for any length of time. "I laughed," writes her mother, "at that Capentras, whom you shut into his room while you are busy, assuring him the while that he requires a siesta."

A rare visit to Provence broke the long monotony of Madame de Sévigné's life. The journey from Paris to Grignan occupied three weeks. Any journey involving a crossing of the Rhône was better accomplished on horseback than in a coach, from which the occupants were obliged to descend every moment, on account of the state of the southern roads. The dangers of such a peregrination were very great, for the river, always swift and usually flooded,



often swept away the boats of those who attempted to cross it. Even coaches on the road that skirted it were not immune from peril. "M. de Verville's coach," writes Madame de Sévigné, "was overturned last year. There is also a road practically in the Rhône which we were directed to take. I got out, my horses swam, and the water went into the remotest recesses of the carriage." Other accidents were also common. "My carriage has come thus far (*i.e.*, Lyons) without misfortune or discomfort to myself. Yesterday evening one of my horses was drowned while watering, so that I only have five left. I shall be a disgrace to you, but it will not be my fault."

It was on a visit to Provence that she "performed the last action of life," on which she had so greatly meditated. Her death took place in 1694. She was sixty-eight years old. Madame de Grignan, described by Saint-Simon as "an old and affected beauty," survived her nine years.

## CHAPTER IV

### EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

THERE are many futile speculations on which the student is tempted to waste now and again an idle moment. What, for instance, would be the sentiments of an even affectionate mother who enjoyed that office before Rousseau's day if she could see the position held by the modern infant in society? What would a seventeenth-century father say to a child who refused to marry as the family decreed? What would either parent experience on beholding, on the one hand, the comradeship now so common between father and son; or, on the other hand, the unfilial disrespect with which some children treat their elders? It would be both idle and ridiculous to attempt to answer these questions: but the mere contemplation of them clearly accentuates the gulf which is known to be set between those distant days and ours. The intrinsic importance of childhood as a state did not exist for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries until Rousseau rediscovered it, and the truth that "the child is father to the man" was not grasped by European consciousness until an even later date. Before that time the average view held of childhood was that it represented an inconvenient and tiresome period to be bridged over before the child could be of any practical use to his family. Because children are childish, because they lack reason and firm purpose, it was not thought worth while to study them with a view to understanding the principle of their development. Most parents acknowledged the necessity of teaching their children a series of facts, and calling the process "education." Few, however, believed that constant training was necessary to develop the good and extinguish the bad qualities of a child. Fewer still realised that a

deformed temper is less irremediable than a deformed body. None, at least at the beginning of the century, held childhood to be the critical period of man's life. It was but a stepping-stone to the higher things of the *salon* or the battlefield. The eldest sons of great families were almost invariably destined for the army, while the younger were usually set aside for the Church. For the former commissions, and for the latter abbey, were begged or bought. Special training was usually dispensed with. After a perfunctory education at home or at some academy, the son of a good house was at once put to command a regiment. It was not until Louvois had reformed the service that the young man was obliged to serve a year in a company of musketeers before he might buy a regiment of his own. Courage and a certain imperiousness were the only essentials in the character of a soldier: and the sad ruin of many a career through extravagance testifies to the ignorance of the value of money that was so common among the nobility of the seventeenth century. Carriage-horses, handsome uniforms, ices in hot weather and liqueurs in cold, soon absorbed the slender allowances of poorer men. Those who had exhausted their pay and their private income lived on extortion. Arnauld d'Andilly, who was an officer in his youth, writes: "I never could bring myself to subsist at the expense of the peasant and the poor, as do so many men of my trade."

Until the revived ideals of the Jesuits and the newer theories of the Jansenists had permeated public opinion, no sort of education was considered too inadequate for a soldier. The ignorance of many great lords was phenomenal. Some of them could barely spell and were too lazy to learn. The Duc de Chartres kept an attendant to look out words in the dictionary for him, and the Marquis de Gesvres had a friend who laboured under the delusion that Moses was the author of the Lord's Prayer. The noble Marquis himself was not a much better scholar. Once, while looking at some pictures of the Crucifixion in the King's study, he called the attention of the company to the fact that they were all by the same

master. Some one objected that the paintings hardly resembled one another in style. "That," said the Marquis, "must be an error. This painter's name is INRI—do you not see his name on every one of these pictures?"

The condition of girls was even more deplorable. Marriage or the convent were the only alternatives offered for their choice, and for neither of these was education deemed necessary. As long as a girl knew the rules of precedence and how to address persons of quality, she might in other respects be as ignorant as she liked. No wonder, then, that the usual upbringing of girls and boys alike was barely worthy of the name. There were, of course, many exceptions to this; but the majority of conventional parents did not take any real interest in their children until they were of an age to take their place in society. Babies were put out to nurse and allowed to grow up with the little peasants, their foster-brothers, until they were four or five years old. The parents barely knew (sometimes actually did not know) their own children by sight; and even when they lived under the paternal roof, the children were left to the companionship of servants until they were old enough to be presented, as rational beings, to their mother's friends. Mademoiselle records that her little step-sisters were introduced into their mother's presence for five or seven minutes morning and evening, and that on these solemn occasions Madame said nothing to them except "Stand straight; hold your heads up!" She was not at all concerned to know what they did all the rest of the day. Mademoiselle tells us that they were left alone with other little girls while the nurses gossiped elsewhere, and that they were so much used to being flattered and spoilt to keep them quiet, that no one had any authority over them. Even Louis XIV. used to relate that he was constantly left to his nurse while his governesses enjoyed themselves in their own way. "He ate all he could snatch. If an omelette were being fricasseed, he always managed to seize some morsel which Monsieur and he then devoured in a corner. He spent most of his time with a peasant woman.



His usual companion was the little girl of the waiting-woman of the Queen's waiting-woman. He called her Queen Mary, because they played together at a game called 'à la madame.' He always made her act the part of queen, and himself played at being page or footman, carried her train, pushed her along in a chair, or carried a candlestick before her."

A pretty child, like a toy or a kitten, sometimes enjoyed the attention of grown-up people. One who could repeat a few verses was hailed with cries of "Oh, the charming little thing! the pretty darling!" The Comte de Fiesque is described as being so fond of simple pleasures that "he even plays with a child if it happens to be pretty." More remarkable still is the announcement that "Madame de Heudicourt's little girl is as pretty as an angel. She has spent . . . eight or ten days at Court, and is always hanging on the King's neck. . . . She is five years old."

Most children were so much alarmed at the sight of anyone but their nurse that they burst into tears on beholding their own father and mother. Even when old enough to behave properly, they seldom ate at their father's table, nor did they sit in their parents' presence or speak unless in answer to a question. All children addressed their parents as Monsieur and Madame in public and often in private, and some parents also called their sons and daughters by their titles. The authority of a father was practically without limits. He could imprison his grown-up sons and feed his daughters on bread and water until they consented to marry whom he would. In their pleasures he took little part. Left to themselves in the nursery, the children played "I love my love with an A," "Hunt the slipper" and "Hide-and-seek," or imitated the dignified walk of the beautiful apparition they saw getting into her coach, and whom they knew to be their mother. Games, such as battledore and shuttlecock, ball-throwing and blindman's buff, were played out of doors in the summer.

Children with whose training no pains had been taken, naturally became violent, haughty and selfish, and by the



LOUIS XIV WITH HIS NURSE  
FROM A PAINTING BY AN UNKNOWN ARTIST AT VERSAILLES



age of ten or twelve, unendurable. The parents, instead of blaming themselves, punished the childish offences for which they were themselves responsible, with the result that the existence of affection between father and son was the exception rather than the rule. There were, however, many persons, raised by especial originality or intelligence above the common prejudice, who really loved their children and loved them wisely. Busy fathers found time to choose toys for the young persons sprawling on the nursery floor. Even the Prince de Condé, beset with trouble as he was, spent 2000 crowns in buying a doll with its house, furniture, bed and clothes, for his little innocent daughter, the future Madame de Longueville. Madame Colbert always kept her little girl with her, but the child stood by in silence while her mother played or conversed with visitors. But of all enlightened mothers—or rather grandmothers—Madame de Sévigné was the queen and principal. No intricate record exists of the methods used by her in educating Madame de Grignan, but her letters abound in allusions to the doings of Pauline de Grignan, of whom her grandmother delighted to take charge whenever occasion offered. Even while she was a baby Madame de Sévigné was anxious that her manners should suffer no corruption from evil communications. Rather than leave the child with a nurse, she took both with her on a long journey. “After all,” she writes, “I do not at all like the nurse’s own children, who hang about her in her village, and it is certain that the nurse could never spend the whole summer in Paris without dying of boredom.”

Pauline grew up into a very delightful little girl. Here is a fragment of the constant reports on her progress sent to her mother: and between the lines one may read something of the pride and love of the grandmother. “I have had her hair cut, and it is now dressed à la hurluberlu (in curls). This fashion is simply made for her. Her complexion, her neck, and her whole little body are admirable. She can do a hundred little things. She talks, she strokes, she slaps, she makes the sign of the Cross, she begs pardon, she



curtseys, she kisses her hand, she shrugs her shoulders, she dances, she pats people and takes them by the chin : in short, she is as pretty as she can be. I amuse myself with her for hours together ; and I do not wish the little creature to die " (a curious allusion to the mortality among children at the time).

Pauline soon learnt to read. Her first books were Nicole's *Essais de Morale* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Her grandmother very justly remarked that from these books one would not easily bring her back to *The Sinner's Guide*.

Such was the training afforded to favoured infants. Once out of the nursery the child was suddenly ushered into a new world. Boys belonging to the very highest nobility were provided with a tutor, but otherwise left more or less to their own devices. Lessons were frequently irregular, because on fine days the youthful noble was fain to go out hunting. Louis XIV., who was determined that his sons should have the advantages he himself had missed, ordered Bossuet to make the Dauphin work every day, without, however, depriving him of recreation. But in the case of less able or less conscientious tutors, the lessons given were either very dull or extremely inadequate. Parents, therefore, who really wished their sons to know something, sent them to school. And in the matter of schools, a great reform took place in the seventeenth century. There were three stages through which the would-be scholar might pass. These were the "little schools," *i.e.*, of the Jansenists, the colleges, and the universities ; but as the century advanced, the rivalry for the education of boys lay mostly between the Jesuits and the University of Paris. So great was the prestige of the former, that during their brief banishment from 1595 to 1603, many persons sent their sons abroad to Jesuit schools. This proceeding merely served to increase the jealousy already felt by the professors of the University. On the recall of the Jesuits, permission to teach in the capital was still withheld, although the society was allowed to establish schools in the provinces. The enlargement of the College of La Flèche took place at this period, and the King signified that he bore the

Society no malice, by giving 300,000 books to the College of Clermont. In 1609 leave was given to lecture at this college, but classes for pupils from outside were not authorised till 1618. Thither now flocked the sons of all the great houses of the kingdom, and in its most prosperous days Clermont could boast of six hundred pupils, and La Flèche, where Descartes was educated, of about a thousand. In 1682 the former received the name of "Collegium Ludovici Magni," and the Jesuits, having by that time got the better of the Jansenists, reigned supreme.

The Jesuit system was in truth admirable in many respects, and a vast improvement on the methods of the University. This latter body had received new statutes in the year of Henri IV.'s final triumph, and in the document embodying them occurs a list of subjects to be studied during the six years' course of classic learning which preceded the two years devoted to philosophy. During the first two years grammar was studied with the aid of Cicero's letters, Vergil's *Bucolics*, and Terence's plays. Next there followed Cæsar, Sallust, Ovid, and the rest of Vergil. After these there came Horace, Juvenal, Perseus, and Cicero's treatises. The course ended with a study of certain Greek writers. The two years' course of philosophy consisted mainly of a dissection of the *Commentaries* of Aristotle. The teaching was very mechanical, and as no language but Latin was spoken by the students, their lives were indeed joyless. None might go out without permission, nor was there any time provided for recreation except two hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when the boys might play together. In winter only one hour a week was allowed for play. The food was bad and fires were not thought necessary. Something may be learnt respecting the penury of students from the *Histoire comique de Francion* (1633). The hero of this work avows that he burnt his straw mattress in winter for the sake of warmth. 'I had,' says he, "a cap that lacked stiffening, a coat without buttons, fastened with pins or with tags, a gown all tattered, a black collar and white shoes . . . and he who spoke to

me on the matter of personal cleanliness thereby constituted himself my enemy." The wearing of hats, boots, swords or curls was prohibited. The scholars were, however, not as docile as the regulations composed for their benefit would lead one to suppose. The rules above quoted were counsels of perfection rather than laws to be obeyed. Riots took place at frequent intervals. In 1625 there was so serious a disturbance that the papal legate, who found himself in the midst of it, was thrown from his mule and obliged to fly for his life. The University was becoming too weak to keep in hand so large a body of persons whose only relaxation was a fight. The growing prosperity of the Jesuits was sapping the strength of the older educational systems. The Sorbonne, which had Richelieu for its pillar and support, was a body of learned theologians, whose work it was to pronounce judgment rather than to instruct; and with the advancing century all persons of position united in sending their sons to the great Jesuit colleges.

The chief merit of the Jesuit system was that it did not lose sight of the fact that a child is a human being, with a mind very largely dependent on his body, in need of recreation and fresh air as much as of moral instruction. A rigid but reasonable discipline governed the schools. The Romans ceased to be the "implacable enemies" of the little Frenchmen, who found themselves obliged to study their language. Latin plays were made living and forcible to the children by actual representation. There were, nevertheless, grave flaws in this otherwise admirable system of education. The Jesuits, desirous of being all things to all men, occasionally found themselves in positions in which justice and interest clashed. Some of them were respecters of persons, or perhaps rather of positions, and this trait occasioned very regrettable incidents, such as the following: The Maréchal de Boufflers had a boy of great promise, whom he had sent to a Jesuit college at which the two sons of d'Argenson, the Chief of Police, were also pupils. The three children (Boufflers was only fourteen) found themselves involved in

some foolish scrape which drew upon them the attention of the Heads of the College. All were equally to blame, but the masters, afraid to rouse the anger of so powerful a man as d'Argenson, refrained from punishing his sons. Boufflers was whipped, fell ill from resentment, and died four days afterwards. "The King," says Saint-Simon, "greatly regretted this occurrence."

In a Jansenist school the teaching was as good and perchance a little more comprehensive. The whole tone of the establishment was, however, on a higher level. A Jesuit boy on entering the world of society proved himself a cultured gentleman, well able to quote Horace, having a proper respect for position and even money. He was a person of exquisite manners, pliable, ready to conceal his own views rather than offend: suave, careful, polished even to the verge of colourlessness: one, in short, who proposed to enjoy this life without losing his hold on the next. The Jansenist, on the other hand, cared not at all for the glory of the world. He could certainly out-quote the Jesuit, and his manners were as courtly though, perhaps, more distant. He had all the sobriety that the Jesuit preferred to lack. Wit was an ornament of conversation so frequently verging on uncharitableness that the Jansenists did not encourage indulgence in it. Pascal was born with the profoundest, truest sense of humour Heaven ever gave a man, and in the *Provincial Letters* he showed himself ironical and humorous, because he could not help himself. But lesser men of his creed preferred the humble vales of gravity to the more dangerous precipices of satire, however just. They were unruffled from conviction, as the Jesuits were from policy. The attraction of their system, based as it was on real and vital principles, was of a very lasting nature. Few men brought up in a Jansenist atmosphere belied the promise of their youth. Even Racine, led far astray by the tyranny of an artistic temperament, suddenly renounced the pomp of success to return with childlike and delightful confidence to the friends of his early days.



It has already been observed that women destined for the cloister or for marriage were not thought to be in need of any training whatever. As soon as they were presentable they were ushered into Society without any preliminary instruction. As often as not they were married straight from the nursery. The result of this system was that a husband often found himself married to a little girl who could in no way claim to be a companion to him. Many girls married at the age of fourteen or fifteen had hardly seen the outside of their home or their convent. They knew absolutely nothing of contemporary events, of history, or of literature. Their taste was unformed and their conversation limited to subjects such as the faults of their friends or the best method of preserving the complexion. Some could barely read or write. Claire-Clémence de Maillé-Brézé married the great Condé when still of an age to play with her doll; and when after a year of married life her husband went to join the army, she was sent to school, so that by the time of his return she might know how to read and write. A letter from Gaston d'Orléans to his daughter also testifies to the inadequacy of female education in his time. "From henceforward," wrote the father, "let your letters containing important matter be written by the hand of your secretary, for the reason we know." "The reason," adds Mademoiselle, "was that I write so badly that people have all the difficulty in the world in reading my writing."

Those girls who were not married before the age of seventeen or eighteen endured a painful period of constraint at home before their emancipation came. A governess was usually the supreme arbiter of their fate during these years. Mademoiselle tells us that her governess, Madame de Fiesque, drew up a rule of life for her which her father approved and signed. The points that seem to have chiefly irritated the young lady were two in number. The first of these was that no evening engagements might be made without the consent of Gaston. (The obtaining of this leave was a difficult matter, as he either lived in a different house

or was away altogether.) The second grievance was that details, such as the obligation to make the sign of the Cross on waking, should be solemnly put down in black and white. To do so, thought Mademoiselle, was "childish." She also laments the fact that her governess made an inventory of all her jewels to prevent her from giving them away, and had also removed the key of her desk, so that Mademoiselle could write no letters which Madame de Fiesque did not see. Mademoiselle was at that time fifteen, but as naughty as a child of ten. Her governess's habit of surprising conversations and of never leaving her alone naturally enraged her, and rebellion against the tyrant was a not infrequent occurrence. On one occasion Mademoiselle was locked up in her room because she had refused to take a remedy for a cold. She managed, however, to escape. Her first action thereupon was to turn the key upon the unconscious Madame de Fiesque in *her* room; her next, to lock up the lady's little grandson in another place. The child yelled, the grandmother stormed, and Mademoiselle enjoyed the most perfect triumph while listening to the united ejaculations of both. It is to be presumed that Madame de Fiesque was not unique, and that most girls had such passes of arms with their instructresses. Many too, especially royal children, who were on the whole the worst brought up in France, were suffered to do nothing but loll on sofas and eat sweetmeats all day long. A lap-dog and an eternal piece of tapestry occupied their attention at intervals. Some had faint glimmerings of ambition to lead a less aimless life. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Madame du Maine made spasmodic efforts to learn pieces of poetry by heart; "but," concludes Saint-Simon, "her mind . . . ended by being corrupted and spoilt by the reading of novels and plays." Few wives knew anything of domestic economy or the management of young children, because at home before their marriage they were carefully excluded from all knowledge on these subjects. Everything was unpunctual. The Comtesse de Maure, for instance, rose so late that she could "hardly find a Mass anywhere." She

ordered her carriage for visiting at 6 P.M., took two hours to dress, and often arrived as the people were getting into bed. Madame de Maure was no exception, and feminine life was unorganised enough to be really uncomfortable.

The reforms so urgently needed in this quarter were inaugurated by a curious pair: the Archbishop of Cambrai and the Marquise de Maintenon. Fénelon had come across many great ladies in the course of his varied life. What chiefly struck him about them was that, clever or stupid, they were all ignorant and therefore ill-adapted to fill the positions to which they were born. He saw, moreover, that the frivolity of some of them was due to a lack of matter for solid thought rather than to inherent flightiness of disposition. Lack of occupation was, in the episcopal opinion, the root of all evil in women. Though far from desiring them to be learned, or, if they had the misfortune to be so, to show it, he wished them to have an acquaintance with all things appertaining to their condition. Some women, he remarks, "pride themselves on saving a candle while they let themselves be cheated wholesale by a steward in the management of their affairs." The system advocated by Fénelon was of a singular breadth, considering the time at which he lived. Like Molière, like La Bruyère, like Madame de Maintenon, he believed that there are a variety of sciences which are above a woman's reach. Knowledge of such would, thought he, detract from her modesty, her traditional and conventional "womanliness," and would moreover, as Mrs Chapone opined in 1822, "excite envy in the one sex and jealousy in the other." "Girls must not even speak," says the Archbishop, "of these things which are above their reach as girls, even if they have some knowledge of them." The attitude is a curious one, and the injunction "to hide what they know," which follows a recommendation to learn Latin, is even more curious. But apart from lurking prejudices, which are not quite defunct even in this twentieth century, Fénelon's letter on the education of girls is a model of acumen, good sense, and humanity. The text of the discourse is, "We must be content



to follow and to aid nature, which has endowed [women] with industry, capacity and economy, in order to occupy them quietly in their own houses." Here speaks the pioneer of Rousseau and the first herald of the modern world, for Boileau's "Nature" was an entirely different goddess. Thus, in dealing with little children, the teacher must aim at making learning pleasant, by setting up no hard and fast barrier between it and pleasure. Say to a child: "Stop playing and come to your lessons," and you suggest to him at once that there is no amusement to be found in learning. "Therefore," implores Fénelon, "let the child play, and do you mix instruction with the game . . . but take good care not to tire him by an unwise exactitude." Again: "You must find some way of making the things you demand of a child agreeable to him. If you have something unpleasant for him to do, make him understand that the pain occasioned thereby will very soon be followed by pleasure. Always point out to him the utility of the things you teach him." Above all, make yourself beloved, and do not bewilder a child by telling him of several faults at once. Be constantly kind, and let punishments be so rare that their solemnity may call up in the child a sense of awe which will leave a permanent impression. Impersonate abstract justice, but show a human grief at the sin rather than anger with the sinner. See that the child is well and happy. Let him take his food regularly, but forbid all eating between meals, and check greediness in any form.

Reading and writing should be looked upon as a game. "The two errors which spoil everything," continues Fénelon, "are, firstly to compel children to learn to read in Latin, which deprives them of all the pleasure of reading; and secondly, to accustom them to read with a forced and ridiculous emphasis. One ought to give them a well-bound book with gilt edges, pretty pictures, and good print. With such a bait to tempt him to study, the child will almost teach himself, and will certainly make far more rapid progress than he would in set lessons which are repugnant to him."



The same method is to be pursued in the teaching of writing. If several children are being taught together, let them be roused to interest by establishing a friendly rivalry between them in the matter of writing notes to the teacher. Never let the time devoted to writing degenerate into a tedious lesson. In short, if human sympathy with the pleasures and forbearance with the limitations of little children be the teacher's chief characteristic, he will run small risk of making any very serious mistake.

All this is admirable, anticipating, in some respects, the methods of Fröbel and the modern Kindergarten. But when the Archbishop passes on to considerations regarding the training of girls, his views fall within a narrower groove. He desires women to have the fullest instruction in matters relating to activities by common consent more especially theirs. In order that a house should be well managed, the mistress of it should be familiar with the nature of every servant's duty, so that she may command reasonably and with justice. But all vain and unprofitable scholarship should be avoided, and women must have "as great a modesty with regard to learning as that inspired by a horror of vice." Little girls should be taught stories from the Bible, such as the ever-fascinating history of Joseph and his brethren; animal fables might also be told, with a view to letting the child retail them again afterwards in her own words. But heathen myths should be avoided, and she who ignores them all her life long is, in Fénelon's opinion, blessed. Greek and Roman history can, however, be taught with no evil results, "and," continues the Archbishop, "do not allow them to be ignorant of French history, *which also has its beauties*. If a girl must learn a foreign language, let it be Latin rather than a modern idiom. Above all, let a woman shun idleness, and let her accustom herself from earliest youth never to sit with her hands in her lap." In common with most serious persons of his age, Fénelon deprecated the reading of novels and comedies. Music he counsels as a pastime, but he has a classic superstition concerning the

enervating results of excessive indulgence in it. Drawing is, in his opinion, a far more feminine occupation, although he does not believe that women can rival men in that or any other accomplishment. But the drawing of designs for lace and embroidery will cultivate the taste of girls, give them an increased interest in their perpetual needlework, and above all, occupy time which might be far less suitably employed.

The exercise of religious duties, including that of charitable work among the poor, must form part of the daily curriculum. The puerile superstitions to which women are much addicted, such as fearing to spill salt or to be thirteen at table, should be ousted by a proper confidence in the divine Providence. In short, a girl should be educated to serve her neighbour in order that she may the better thereby serve God. But parents must avoid falling into the error of supposing that a convent is the only or even the best school for a young girl; for either the convent is a worldly one, in which she would learn to despise religion, or else it is a strict one in which it is impossible to acquire knowledge of that world in which she may be called upon to take a prominent place.

The methods suggested by Fénelon have, in spite of certain limitations, a generosity and largeness of conception which one cannot hope to find in any but a man of genius. His great rival and collaborator, Madame de Maintenon, could not attain to the same wide outlook. Her system, as practised at Saint-Cyr, shows a keen sense of the requirements of the women of her age, without in any way suggesting that its exponent had been able to divest herself of preconceived notions on female education. The incidents of her own youth gave her a very clear idea of the meaning of poverty to one of gentle birth. Her own experience taught her what manner of education was best fitted to advance a poor girl on her path through life, and her subsequent extraordinary fortunes gave her the opportunity of carrying her benevolent schemes into effect. Her early training shows itself in her character in later life. Prosperity never made her reckless or extravagant. Her caution never deserted

her, so that the King's wife showed the same vigilance in regulating her conduct with decorum, as the little girl who kept the geese so many years before. One whose mother only kissed her twice cannot have known much of love; and indeed this chief and most vital of passions seems to have been almost entirely wanting in her composition. She had a liking for the Duchesse de Bourgogne, and she loved her pupil, the Duc du Maine, but her regard for others was ever of a tepid nature. Her warmest expression of approval is "J'aime assez." "I rather like," said she, "what are called naughty children, that is to say the spirited, the hot-tempered and even the slightly obstinate." Her upbringing by a relative after she had been abandoned by her mother, furnished her with many opportunities of learning how steep are the stairs of other people's houses. She told the pupils at Saint-Cyr that in her childhood she never wore shoes except when visitors arrived. Her days were chiefly spent in wandering about the fields in wooden shoes, driving the turkeys before her to pasture. On her face was a mask to preserve her from sunburn, for after all she was noble, though penniless. In one hand she held a basket containing her frugal luncheon, and in the other a volume of Pibrac, of which it was her duty to learn a portion. Her earliest reading had, however, been Plutarch's *Lives*, for she tells us that even before she left her mother, she and her brother were forbidden to talk about anything whatsoever except the things they read of in that book. At fourteen she was married to the paralytic Scarron, and for the first time knew what it was to lean back in a chair. "I thought, like a fool," says she, "that to lean back was to act the great lady." On her husband's death she was left young, pretty, and above all penniless. Scarron was able to bequeath her nothing except a testament in verse, in which he grants

"A ma femme, qui n'est par bèque  
Pouvoir de se remarier."

"To my wife who is not shy  
Leave to take another husband."

All Madame Scarron's care now, was to maintain her "reputation." Later, when haranguing the girls at Saint-Cyr, she constantly impressed on them the necessity of being well thought of by others, and pointed to her own case as an example. She even went so far as to admit that her motive in serving others had been that she might thereby establish her reputation of being a virtuous woman.

On this principle she acted all through her life. Nothing ever ruffled her temper, no one ever drew from her a hasty or an indiscreet remark. She foresaw and provided for every contingency. The only one she was unable to provide for was that of unwonted critical observation in the person with whom she was dealing. It often happened, therefore, that while she was working for the good of another, from motives of policy as well as from real charity, that person would have great facility in deceiving her with regard to his real opinions. A certain young nobleman had the advantage of receiving a daily visit from his mother and Madame de Maintenon during an illness. The main object of the two ladies was to convert the young man from a gay life to a sober one. The days were long, and the patient conceived the idea of making the time pass by pretending to be in truth converted. This wicked youth sighed, groaned and lamented his past career in their presence; but directly they were gone, he re-enacted the scene for the benefit of his own friends, who were allowed to enter after the state visit had been paid. "It must be said," concludes Saint-Simon, who relates the anecdote, "that except for the sublime manœuvring of her political schemes, and in her relations with the King, she was the queen of dupes."

It had long been the ambition of Madame de Maintenon to found a college for the education of poor girls of noble birth, which should also provide a home for a number of ladies called upon to teach the same, as well as a refuge for herself on the King's death. Louis XIV. very readily entered into her charitable schemes, and in 1686 the



school of Saint-Cyr was opened for the reception of 250 poor girls and thirty-six ladies, besides a number of women of lower rank. Candidates for admission were obliged to prove nobility for four generations on both sides, and to be the daughters of parents unable to provide for them in any other way. The age of admission was from seven to twelve, and that of leaving from nineteen to twenty. The school was divided into four classes, each of which was subdivided into five or six "bands," consisting of twelve children. The first or red class was composed of little girls under ten, who learnt reading, writing, arithmetic, the elements of grammar, the Catechism and a little Bible-history. At eleven they passed into the green class, where music, elementary history, geography and mythology were taught in addition to the subjects above enumerated. At fourteen the pupils entered the yellow class to learn French, music, some theology, and the profane arts of drawing and dancing. The final or blue class was reached at the age of seventeen. The girls now learnt only music, moral sciences, and the finer possibilities of their own language. The rest of their time was devoted to helping in the lower classes, doing plain needlework, learning domestic economy and cooking, and even sweeping rooms. It was Madame de Maintenon's aim to avoid the undue culture of the imagination by means of history and literature, for fear that "great instances of magnanimity and heroism might exalt the girls' minds in an undue degree." Opportunities of contact with the outside world were reduced to a minimum number. The pupils were only allowed to see their parents for half an hour during the octaves of the four great feasts, and then only in the presence of a mistress.

Much concerning the inner life of the place may be gathered from the *Entretiens et Conversations en dialogue* which Madame de Maintenon wrote for the improvement of the young ladies. She was accustomed to go to Saint-Cyr a certain number of times a week, to transact the necessary business, and to talk to the pupils individually as

well as in classes. Her knowledge of the institution was, therefore, greater than that enjoyed by the majority of founders. The rule appears to have increased in severity, for the *Conversations morales*, written by the admirable Made-moiselle de Scudéry on purpose for the college, were excluded as being too mundane about 1690; and, two years later, the old pupils who stayed on under the name of *Dames de Saint Louis* were compelled to supplement their simple rule by that of the Augustinian nuns. The number of these ladies was then about forty. One may gather, too, from the frequent reprimands suffered by the girls for having spoken much of "liberty in the outside world," that their own lives were singularly restricted. Any of them who found the system intolerable were allowed to leave. Those who remained until they reached the age of twenty, received a dowry of 3000 louis. The case of those who left earlier was often a sad one, for some of them had no home, and none had means of livelihood. M. Tiberge, the confessor of the college, was greatly concerned at their probable fate. He always tried not to lose sight of them after they left. Six or seven of them, whom he found drifting aimlessly about Paris, he placed in a convent at his own expense, on condition that in the future they did nothing important without his advice.

The girls of Saint-Cyr must have been happy on the whole, for although they were never left alone, their mistresses were extremely kind to them. Madame de Maintenon's injunction that the girls should not be taught to keep their eyes on the ground speaks volumes. No reading except of pious works was allowed, but games out of doors and under proper supervision were frequent. When the mistress was ill, the children were obliged to stay indoors, rather than go into the garden alone. A remark such as the following sounds strange to our hygienic ears: "What harm could possibly be done by allowing them to remain for a time without taking the air? Does this not often happen to children in the world who are more distinguished than these are?" This

sentence also sounds the keynote of Madame de Maintenon's policy in educating these poor noblewomen. It was her constant aim to open their eyes to their real circumstances. She wished to prove to them that they were better off at Saint-Cyr than they would have been in their own homes; to crush all extravagant ambitions with regard to their future state in life; and to warn them that their existence would probably be a painful one, which nothing but a profound piety could render tolerable. Girls who complained of a lack of liberty were reminded that if they were living in apartments with their mothers, they would not be suffered to set foot outside the door alone. To those who wished to shout or play noisy games, it was suggested that probably their own mothers were among those who did not even allow laughing in their rooms. Others were told that perchance their mothers had only two waiting-women, both of them peasants. One would probably be the children's governess, and as this functionary was often also the washerwoman, the girls would run the risk of spending all their time in listening to scoldings for "crushing or spilling ink upon their aprons." All were assured that poverty would press heavily upon them when they left Saint-Cyr. "Some of you," said their instructress, "will be reduced to making handkerchiefs out of the sleeves of old shirts." Their *début* into society was painted in the blackest colours, possibly with a view to emphasising the attraction of the religious vocation. The grand rule of life proposed for them seems to have been: "Regard men in general as your worst enemies," for "they are naturally tyrannical and desirous of pleasure and liberty, and anxious that women should renounce both. They are the masters: our only course is to suffer with a good grace."

But as it was possible that some at least of the girls at Saint-Cyr might marry wealthy men, and thereby acquire an important position, many lectures were given on the duties which would then be theirs. The foundation of a happy and prosperous life is religion. "We absolutely must," says their instructress, "attend High Mass and a sermon once in



three weeks ; the pious do so every Sunday." Nor is the curé to be despised if he happens to be the brother of a valet. His instructions are to be attended, even if he is known to be a drunkard, although in this case it is not necessary to confide in him. Families living in the country should do all that in them lies to set a good example to their tenants. The mistress should rise at six in summer and seven in winter, say her prayers, and take a turn to see that all are at their appointed work. She should then complete her toilet and go to Mass. (It was not unusual for people to go to Church first and finish dressing afterwards.) The day should be devoted to household tasks and necessary visiting. A walk may be taken in the evening. The supper hour should be eight, and that of family prayers 10 P.M. A good woman will visit the poor after Vespers on Sunday, and send them the food left from her table. She will also speak a word in season to her servants before the greater feasts, so as to induce them if possible to make their communion as the Church enjoins.

Deportment received great attention at Saint-Cyr, and many were the injunctions laid upon those about to leave regarding it. The girls were especially implored to exercise self-discipline in refraining from actions which even respectable women of the world allowed themselves to engage in. Curling the hair, originally permitted at Saint-Cyr, was given up after a retreat held there by M. Tiberge, and it was hoped that girls returning to the world would continue to refrain from this "vanity." They were also bidden not to smoke nor drink stimulants. If one asked what other customs indulged in by respectable women were not innocent, Madame de Maintenon replied : "Do you take no account of the immodest fashions of the present day—of the bare necks and *négligé* costume women indulge in directly they reach home, and which leave them almost undressed ; of the laziness which keeps them lying in arm-chairs or on beds all day long : of that daintiness in food shown in all they take after dinner, snuff, chocolate, tea, coffee, liqueurs, wines



distilled waters; of continual gambling which ruins their families? Do you see in all these habits anything appertaining to the Christian life?"

With regard to servants, Madame de Maintenon took great pains to combat the prevalent notion that they were machines without sense or feeling, made for the service of noble persons. She tells her pupils that the noblest among the nobles are not haughty and do not like to give unnecessary trouble. The girls are taught to call other people's servants "monsieur," and to thank them for any services rendered, though it is not necessary to stand up to do so. When receiving other people's waiting-women they should always rise. In the matter of bowing great care must be taken. Ladies living in the country should bow to every one they meet, though in towns this is not possible.

In a drawing-room it is best to be very reserved. Should a great person offer you snuff you must accept it, but quietly throw it away when he is not looking. Above all, a girl should feign ignorance on most points. "It appertains to the modesty of a girl and a woman to seem to be ignorant of many things, even if she should happen to know them." To possess correct information, even to be able to spell is, in the Marquise's eyes, a crime. "Women," she writes, "never know anything except by halves, and the little they know usually makes them conceited, contemptuous, talkative and disinclined for solid occupation." With regard to spelling, she said that provided a woman did not fall into very glaring faults in this matter, people readily excused other inaccuracies in her correspondence. She used to say that even if one had a perfect knowledge of everything appertaining to this science, one ought to refrain from making complete use of it in writing letters, because "to do so would savour strongly of pedantry in our sex, and would lead people to suppose one wished to set up as a learned woman." For the same reason history, if learnt at all, should be learned "without rule or method." The ideal woman will, in short, have no wishes of her own, and no ambition to shine; a heart empty of all save religion;

no hope for any happiness on earth save that of resignation. She will be admirable, impeccable, full of virtue: but she will not have the ample bosom nor the all-embracing arms of the Mrs Do-as-you-would-be-done-by, over whom the water-babies loved to swarm.

It was not till the eighteenth century that scholarship proper received an impetus strong enough to raise it into the first rank of really important things. Archæology was, however, trying to rise from the torpor in which it had lain ever since the Classical Revival. Private persons also collected libraries as their far more cultured ancestors had done in the sixteenth century. The Comte de Béthune, for instance, possessed 2500 MSS., chiefly on French history, which he left to Louis XIV. in his will.

Natural science, on the other hand, made rapid advances during the seventeenth century. A brilliant assembly of doctors and chemists succeeded in emancipating medicine proper from its bondage to alchemy and sorcery; and even if superstition did not entirely lose its hold on the minds of all practitioners as well as all patients, it was only used as a last resort. The mediæval custom of drinking water in which a gold coin had been boiled had died out, but a belief in the virtue of so valuable a metal still showed itself in the practice of taking "drinkable gold" as a medicine. Madame de Maintenon's first husband always believed that he would be cured if he only drank enough liquid gold. Madame de Sévigné's friend, Corbinelli, was also a firm believer in its power. "Corbinelli is not well yet," she writes. "The liquid gold has dried him up." Madame de Sévigné was herself a little superstitious. When suffering from a sore leg she consulted a Capuchin monk, who assured her that if she buried a bunch of herbs twice a day in the garden, her leg would heal as the herbs rotted away. The Marquise laughed at him, but none the less ordered a "little funeral" of herbs to take place morning and evening until her leg was well. A really learned doctor, who expressly denied the existence

of magic, nevertheless maintained that the best cure for quartan fever was to place a split white herring, tail upwards, along the patient's backbone. In miracles he was pleased to believe, and when at Loudun he expressly asked to see the Superior of an Ursuline convent, on whose hand the devil had written three words in red. The scientist inspected the marks with interest, passed his fingers over them, and ended by scratching off some of the red ink which Satan had used. "I was convinced respecting the truth of *that*," was the doctor's ambiguous remark on taking leave of the convent. This occurred about 1665.

Remedies now became really remedial. The foundation of "Le Jardin des Plantes" in 1626 was an all-important step in the right direction. Here Guy de la Brosse, the first Director of the garden, and physician-in-chief to Louis XIII., experimented on the growing of plants for medical use. Chocolate was believed to heat the blood, but tea was used as a remedy very frequently. Madame de Sévigné speaks of a princess who drank twelve or fourteen cups a day, while her nephew consumed thirty or forty every morning as a medicine. The value of fresh air was less understood, and the first thing to be done when a person fell ill was to close the doors and windows. Their opening again was a sure sign to the outside world that the patient was dead. Madame de Maintenon relates that a servant sent by her to enquire for M. de la Lade was quite unable to enter the sick-room on account of the atmosphere. "The patient, poor man, did not wish them to open as much as a shutter, thinking it would harm him, which was perhaps true."

The more famous doctors were usually attached to the service of great men, and in some cases their office was no sinecure. It was not that the great men were always ill, but that they expected their whims and fads to be taken seriously by all their servants. The doctor was still trembling on the borderland of a servitude similar to that of the valet. Even the great Guy Patin asserts that certain noblemen so much enjoyed his conversation that they placed

a gold louis under his plate when he dined with them. Finot, the physician whose lot it was to keep the son of the great Condé in health, had a difficult task to accomplish. Condé was quite mad as well as quite wicked. He was at the same time a cultured student of letters who enjoyed nothing better than having a few learned Jesuits staying with him at his castle of Chantilly. His dissipations gradually reduced him to ill-health and finally to periodic insanity. He had always been eccentric. It was his custom to have a dinner consisting of some soup and half a fowl cooked every day at Paris, Chantilly, and two other places, so that he might find food ready wherever he took it into his head to ride. The last of his manias was that he believed himself to be dead. He refused all food, and soundly rated those who showed such a deplorable ignorance of science as to suppose that the dead can eat. Dr Finot was at his wits' end until it occurred to him to acquiesce in the idea. He condoled with Condé on his "late death and burial," but offered to introduce to him several other corpses of his acquaintance who would be only too delighted to meet a person belonging to so illustrious a house. Several people playing the part of dead men were thereupon fetched, and at once asked for food, assuring Condé that he was labouring under a delusion concerning the capabilities of corpses. Condé was convinced, and ate with the others. But to the end of his life he would dine in no other company. Finot, serious man though he was, could not restrain his laughter at the "nether-world gossip\*" he was privileged to hear at these meals.

The seventeenth century was singularly fertile in heated arguments between learned men. As the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns in literature, so were those of the bleeders and the non-bleeders, of the advocates of antimony and its opponents, in medicine. Never was so entertaining a series of letters written as those of Guy Patin. There is something of the common sense of Sir Thomas

\* "Propos d'outre tombe."



Browne in this his great admirer. Patin detested folly in every form. And the height of folly in his eyes was to deny the value of bleeding and to advocate the use of antimony. His chief antagonist in the matter was Eusèbe Renaudot, son of the great and good Théophraste. Patin seems to have kept count of the deaths due, according to him, to want of bleeding, and to have taken a gloomy pleasure in observing their number. His joy in recording lives saved by bleeding is equally great. One of his patients was "a young gentleman aged seven years, who contracted pleurisy while playing tennis. He was bled thirteen times and cured in a fortnight as if by miracle." The irony of this last observation seems to have escaped the worthy doctor.

Next to the partisans of antimony and the opponents of bleeding, Patin hated monks "who," said he, "live by promising us their prayers such as they are, and Paradise, which isn't theirs, in return for money which is certainly ours." Mazarin he describes as "that clown in a cassock, that actor in a red cap, the cause of all our ills and the ruin of France." Patin further detested noise, chatter, much rushing to and fro, and the needless vanity and bustle of the world. One who blamed him for not caring to witness solemn processions was thus answered: "If you blame me, I promise you that the first time the Pope comes to Paris, I will go on purpose as far as the Rue Saint-Jacques to meet him, and then I will pass the time [of waiting] in some book-shops reading a book; and even then I shall be doing all this simply to please you." Reading was his chief pleasure and the purchase of books his only luxury. Yet when Fouquet's books were sold, he refused to buy one of them, because his nicer feelings were revolted at the treatment meted out to the disgraced minister. "They are going to sell M. Fouquet's great library," he writes, "the posters are already up in the street. I have been invited to go to the sale, but I shall not go. That man's ill-luck displeases me, and the sight of any of his books in my house would make me feel sick."

One curiosity noted by Patin is particularly interesting in these days of motor-cars and quasi-intelligent machinery. On 20th January 1645 he speaks of an Englishman "who proposes to have carriages made which will go from Paris to Fontainebleau and back again in one day without horses, by means of admirable springs."

The seventeenth century was then one of transition in matters of education. Learned men were patronised in the more unpleasant sense of the term. Many children were still educated in a perfunctory manner. But the fact remains that it was the scholars trained on the methods of the Jesuits and the Jansenists, as well as the women modelled on the ideals of Fénelon and of Saint-Cyr who constituted the brilliant society of eighteenth-century France. Thanks to the laborious studies of their seventeenth-century predecessors, most eighteenth-century men and women were able to be really well-informed without an enormous amount of trouble. Information had become more accessible. The seventeenth century had provided dictionaries, scientific treatises, above all, literary masterpieces for study. It had widened the intellectual horizon and, in spite of its nominal orthodoxy, had paved the way for free enquiry into every problem in that scientific spirit which is the chief characteristic of the modern world.

## CHAPTER V

### PARIS CITY

**E**VEN in the seventeenth century the most cutting accusation a man could bring against his enemy was that of being provincial. Parisian beggars scorned the country tramps. Frequenters of the Court laughed long and loud at the bewilderment of their country cousins in Paris. Nevertheless it was the middle class of the capital that permitted itself to feel the greatest contempt for its rural equivalent in other parts of France. This was probably due to the fact that the bourgeoisie, more than any other stratum of the nation, summed up in itself and most adequately expressed the aspirations of the whole race. It had to perfection all the faults of the national character: it possessed in an equally marked degree the national virtues. A typical bourgeois might be vain, a little pretentious, a little ill-advised in his readiness to plunge into the excitement of an unpremeditated revolution; but in business he was careful, hard-working, honourably just. At home he was a good husband and master: to the poor he was charitable. Though mindful of his own dignity, he never forgot that of others. In him lay the real strength of the nation—a fact which was fully grasped and utilised with admirable results by Louis XIV. if not by Henri IV. The latter King was a kind of Béranger among sovereigns. He loved the people, their easy temper, their comfortable tolerance and their primeval forms of pleasure. He was as much embarrassed by the formality of a courtly life as by the rebuke implied in the attitude of the bourgeoisie towards everything that savoured of jesting on vital questions. His son, lacking his capacity for physical enjoyment, had nothing in common with the lowest classes of his subjects.

About the bourgeoisie he knew little, and his natural love for arms and warfare drew him towards the class whose trade it was to fight; so that by the end of his reign his close association with the *noblesse* became as proverbial as that of his father with *le peuple*. It was left to Louis XIV. to abandon the policy of both, and to enter into a tacit partnership with the middle classes against both nobility and people. History had already borne witness to the fact that the title *bourgeois de Paris* carried with it a solid weight of corporate influence against which even the King was powerless in the long run. Louis XIV. appreciated the firmness of the base on which bourgeois prestige was founded. The hard adventures of his youth had certified him as to the extent of bourgeois power; the work of Colbert, Bossuet and Louvois left him in no doubt as to the quality of bourgeois talent. Thus (strange anomaly!) the most pretentious of monarchs became the King *par excellence* of the merchant classes.

The bourgeoisie of Paris was a nation in itself, broken up into sets almost perfectly distinct from one another. The highest class consisted of judges, magistrates, professors at the Sorbonne, persons employed in the higher offices of the Government, and a few great merchants. These persons mixed with the *noblesse*, married their well-dowered daughters to the sons of peers, and looked, spoke and behaved like persons of quality. They possessed, however, a solid fund of virtue, of which many of them found it very difficult to rid themselves when about to attempt a migration into the higher walks of society. The second grade of the middle class consisted of well-to-do tradespeople, heads of corporations and trade-guilds, apothecaries, doctors, comfortable butchers and grocers content to spend their evenings in the little parlour behind the shop, or in walking up and down the Place Maubert. The lowest class consisted of artisans, day-labourers, small tradespeople, hucksters, servants, charlatans, street singers, newsmongers, and all the miscellaneous persons who woke the echoes of the Paris streets with shouts and clatter.



The patrician bourgeoisie, with a certain length of pedigree behind them and gold pieces in their purses, lived a measured and imposing life. Their houses were heavily-furnished and well kept. The friends they entertained at dinner were regaled with costly foods of a solid nature. The ladies of the family were religious, good housekeepers, not inordinately fond of pleasure. The master of the house loved his wife, and was, like Racine, prepared to refuse even a royal invitation rather than disappoint his children by absenting himself from a birthday-party.

Bourgeois etiquette was as strict as that observed by persons of a higher walk in life. Great conventionality regulated the behaviour of host and guests, so that intercourse must have been seriously hampered by wearying formalities. Here, for instance, is a model conversation to be studied by host and guest alike before embarking on the intricacies of a dinner-party :

*Host.* Please to walk in [before me].

*Second Guest.* Never could I be guilty of such a mistake !

*Host.* Pray set ceremony aside.

*First Guest.* I will not, sir. I could never pass in front of you !

*Host.* Why make all these difficulties ? We might be at table by this time. Enter, I beseech you.

*Second Guest.* We will not—we would rather stand here all day.

*Host.* Well, I will pass first then, but it is only to obey you. I would rather be incivil than importunate. Now, sirs, we must not let the food get cold, for that will not improve it. Kindly sit there, sir.

*First Guest.* Not till you have taken your place.

*Host.* Heaven preserve me from doing so ! I beg you, let us waste no more time ! Have you come here to do penance ?

*Second Guest.* The penance is a sweet one then, sir.

(*They sit down.*)



A RICH BOURGEOIS FAMILY  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY A. ROSSE



*Host.* You must excuse me, sirs, for offering you so poor a dinner—I cannot imagine what is happening to this town; I have not been able to procure anything in it.

*First Guest.* Gad! sir, what could we wish for more? There is here too much meat by half.

*Second Guest.* You wish to put us *hors de combat* in the first course; when I see so much food I feel quite unable to eat. In truth, sir, there are too many dishes on this table. If you were to come and dine with us, you would not be so well entertained. If there were one or two dishes more than usual, I should think it enough; one would then sit down to the bones with a good appetite.

*Host.* Pardon me, there is nothing unnecessary here—I like my table to be well spread. But you are not eating?

*First Guest.* Heavens, sir! when it is I who am eating the most!

*Host.* I will now drink to your health. You are very welcome.

*Second Guest.* (Boy, pour me out some wine.) Sir, I will pledge you.

*Host.* Stop, sir! you must not mix it with water! This wine is quite light.

*Second Guest.* It is excellent . . .

*First Guest.* What, sir? Yet another course? What can you be thinking of? You must be laughing at us! You are not treating us as friends, and do not wish us to come again!

*Host.* These are only two or three things that were given to me. This rabbit and this leveret were caught in a trap, and cost me nothing.

*Second Guest.* Here we have a rabbit from a really good warren; I never tasted a better one in my life.

*Host.* Courage, then! let us partake of it, let us enjoy ourselves. . . . When we have dispatched this rabbit we can have in another.

*Host.* Here, boy, clear away. It does not seem as if these gentlemen would eat any more.



*First Guest.* I' faith! we have eaten too much. I never feel the better for it when I have joined in such an orgy.

*Second Guest.* As for me, I cannot eat another morsel, so stoutly did I attack that leveret.

*Host.* Pray to God, sirs, for the ill-entertained. It is not great banquets which make the fastest friends. The poor dinner I have offered you was offered with real pleasure. A friendly welcome is worth all the feasts in the world."

A sensible man might thus live comfortably in his house, respected by his neighbours and worshipped by the poor. Occasionally a courtier, bristling with feathers, came to air his satin coat-tails in front of the more plebeian hearth. He then recounted the latest anecdote in presence of the mistress in the great arm-chair, the cat by the hearth and the baby rolling on the floor. A maid brought in gooseberry-juice or lemonade on a salver; the Queen's health, the new fashion in stockings, the latest Jansenist extravagance were discussed. Then the visitor, pompously protesting that the King would notice his absence if he did not put in an appearance at the royal walk, departed in a hurry. The master returned to his desk, and his wife to the sheet she was hemming. The cat slept on as before.

But by the end of Louis XIII.'s reign this happy state of things was not universal. The general upheaval of society, occasioned by the wars of religion, had sown the seeds of discord in all men's minds. The nobility desired greater power, more money, a wider theatre for display. The bourgeoisie coveted the position which the *noblesse* were anxious to abandon for an even higher one. About 1620 the mania for aping the manners and pretensions of those above them had largely impaired the peace of mind of the merchant classes. By the accession of Louis XIV., the snobbish citizen was a well-defined and very common type. Those who had children sought to contract alliances for them with penniless nobles. Molière observed and struck at this failing again and again. Many of them tried to edge themselves into Court and society

by acquiring country houses, struggling to talk the jargon of fashionable people, striving to learn to fence, to swear, to gamble, to write love-letters; in fact, to go against their natural instincts in every way possible. Again Molière observed, recorded, and bequeathed to us the immortal M. Jourdain. Others sat up all night inventing pedigrees for themselves, or conning books of manners and learning verses they did not understand, to recite to some "belle marquise" they did not love, but whom it was fashionable to court with desperate ardour. Family portraits might always be bought at the nearest picture-shop, and the silver of a bankrupt noble looked well under the new chandeliers. Brand-new plate might easily be made to look old. The spiteful Tallemant cites a councillor, named Sévin, who rolled his silver pots and dishes up and down stairs at night, so that the dents thus acquired might impart an air of antiquity to them. The one aim of the more youthful *parvenu*, especially from the lower bourgeoisie, was to be taken for a man about town, a real nobleman with a proper pedigree and a grandmother who had been lady-in-waiting at Court. When the business of the day was over, the law-courts closed, the counting-house and shop shut up, the young spark covered his cropped hair with a fair wig, festooned himself with bunches of lace and ribbon, and sallied forth to meet some female friend in the gardens of the Tuileries. Vanity abounded. At night the young man went to the theatre or a ball, secretly raging at his inability to replace his cloth stockings by the silk ones affected by persons of quality. But if trade prospered, the purchase of large feathers, as well as of satin waistcoats and silver buckles, became a possibility.

The wives and daughters of pretentious tradesmen were even more ridiculous in their affectations. Many of them wore themselves out and exhausted the housekeeping money in trying to make their inferiors believe them to be grand ladies. The *chaperon* (a band of velvet worn over the head) was no longer used by middle-class women. They now wore masks, patches, taffetas dresses and coral beads like any

great lady. Some wore red silk stockings and tottered about the house in blue or crimson satin shoes, perched on very high heels. To set foot in the kitchen became a sign of low origin. Every citizen's wife now laid claim to a maid, even if it were only the girl who came daily to wash up the plates. The care of the house was entirely neglected. The buying of provisions was left to the servant, who, if she was dishonest, was well able to line her pockets at the expense of her masters. Satires advising her how best to cheat abounded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One such poem enjoins on her to enter cheap fish at a very high price in the housekeeping-book, and to appropriate the balance. If remonstrated with, she must excuse herself by reminding the mistress of the fact that on fast-days there is always a great demand for fish, and that the prices are raised in consequence. She can also sell candle-ends, grease and bones, for her own benefit. "Learn," says the poet, "to profit on pepper and cloves, on the purchase of a broom, of milk, of a cabbage; cheat over onions, parsley, verjuice and vinegar, and, if you are careful, you can enter three times over a thing you only paid for once."

The difficulty of procuring female servants who were neither impudent nor immoral was very great. The lesser bourgeoisie lacked the respectable virtues of the better class of citizen, and many of them were little in advance of their servants in the matter of morals. Still, in spite of the satirists, the fact remains that many an honest if plain-spoken maid was left to be the salt of her class even in that age of vice. Molière has made us familiar with this type of domestic. His Dorines and Flipotes are very free with their tongues, very ready with their chastening palms. They are young, wide-awake, well up in the devices of wickedness. But they are innocent if not ignorant; they call a spade a spade, but they never trifle with vice. They are honest, full of common sense, and above all faithful and simple. Their outspoken criticisms must not surprise us, for the gulf fixed between class and class in the old order before the Revolution was easily bridged



over. The servant of a bourgeois mistress expected to be treated as one of the family, and as such felt herself as much entitled as any one else to a voice in the discussion. Dorine, suddenly introduced into our modern age of liberty, equality and fraternity, would die of longing for the former tyranny under which she had enjoyed freedom of speech.

The lowest classes of all—excluding the submerged multitude of tramps—lived obscurely in the back streets. Those who worked for a master often slept in an attic in his house, where they went to bed sometimes hungry and always candleless. Others had a room elsewhere, in which they lived miserably on bread, vegetables, beans, onions and raw apples. M. Babeau, in his *Vie privée d'autrefois*, gives a complete picture of the Paris artisan, of whom very little record exists. The working day was seventeen hours long, including intervals for meals. That this time was occasionally exceeded is shown by a regulation in 1639, which prohibited the looking-glass makers of Rouen from employing men before 4 A.M. or after 9 P.M. The workman, even when well paid, as under Henri IV., had little time for amusement. His one hope was that eventually he might rise to the position of master, and his chief aim was therefore to save money. But life was hard, and when Sunday came round and the worker arrayed himself in a sober violet or blue serge suit to hear the latest news at an inn, temptation proved too strong, and his earnings were transmuted into wine or lemonade or coffee.

Saints'-days were, however, very numerous, so that Sunday was not the only day of rest; nor was the Parisian artisan always the overworked victim one is tempted to think him. He was "always full of cakes and tarts and pastry," says one. His wife, resplendent in copper earrings, was often a frugal housekeeper. She was also very often a receiver of stolen or contraband goods.

The free time of all, both men and women, was spent in the streets. One of the most characteristic differences between modern and seventeenth-century life lies in this peculiarity. We of to-day like to live in private and to



pursue our avocations in our back parlours. No such instinct for retirement drove the seventeenth century within doors. High and low lived in the full glare of the public eye. The rich at Court, the poor in the street, went about their duties and pleasures unabashed by the scrutiny of other persons. There were few newspapers and few indoor amusements to keep a man at home. Hence the extraordinary animation, not to say confusion, of the Parisian streets. Nowhere else was seen such a jumble—carriages, carts, rearing horses, barrows bright with fruit, muddy pedestrians, impish pages and shouting newsvenders struggled together on the narrow pavements (when there was any). Conjurers, totally unmoved by the commotion, juggled with balls almost under the horses' feet. On either side narrow houses seemed to shoulder each other away from the road. From the windows emerged inquisitive heads, and cascades of soapsuds were not infrequently poured from above by some much harassed housewife. The screams of children, the barking of dogs, the ringing of hand-bells and the incessant shouting of innumerable hawkers rent the heated air. The noise was all the more deafening as the streets were paved with cobble-stones and narrow enough to re-echo from end to end. The gutter, filled with water and refuse, ran down the middle of the causeway, and the passage of a coach or provision-cart could not fail to bespatter the clothes of pedestrians.

Accidents were frequent. A Sicilian visiting Paris in 1692 says that most of its 50,000 houses had seven stories, and that some families lived on the roofs. The noise and the high prices scandalised the worthy provincial. His own hired room was "very expensive," although it contained nothing beyond "wretched hangings covering four thin walls; a bed, a table, a few chairs, a mirror and a portrait of the King." Persons hawking sand, birds, glass trumpets, Dutch biscuits, rosaries, tin pots, fans, spices, etc., woke him in the early morning, and the shouts and laughter of a tipsy crowd returning from the inn broke his slumbers at night. Provision-carts passed regularly in the small hours

of the morning, for the food supply of Paris was carefully organised. A hundred and forty thousand oxen, 550,000 sheep, 125,000 calves and 40,000 pigs were, for instance, brought into the capital in 1698. The populace to be catered for amounted to 800,000 or 900,000 persons.

These provisions were sold by the corporation of butchers, then one of the largest of Parisian guilds. The very violence of the language used by its members increased the respect their opulence evoked, and timid housekeepers were as reluctant to bandy words with their purveyor of meat as they would have been with the Prince of Darkness himself. "Devil take me," cried the butcher, "if this meat is not worth more than you offer me! May I die on the spot if you could not have seen it on the stall marked six *blancs* more than you propose to pay!" Nearly every trade was monopolised by a guild, and an independent tradesman found his life a burden to him. In 1670 we find the bakers of Montbéliard petitioning that a certain woman shall be prohibited from selling bread, because she might equally well "earn her living as a servant or by spinning." Even hawkers were united in a confraternity. That of the *oublieurs* was famed for the peculiarly horrible yells with which its members deafened the bourgeois resting from his day's work. These *oublieurs*—men and women and especially boys with good healthy voices—went their rounds at about 8 P.M. on winter evenings. Their wares were pieces of pastry called *oublies*, made of flour, eggs and honey baked between two hot irons. As was the muffin-man to the characters of Dickens, so was the *oublieur* to the Parisian of the great century. There were, however, grave dangers connected with the countenancing of this trade. Noble intriguers against Mazarin had set the example of dressing as *oublieurs* to facilitate intercourse with other conspirators. The disguise and the pretext for nocturnal wandering was a godsend to these patriots. They, in their turn, were soon imitated by thieves and murderers. Foolish persons invited a passing *oublieur* into the kitchen to buy his wares. If he proved amusing he was even ushered

into the presence of the mistress, where he told the latest news or slyly presented the love-letter some gallant had bribed him to deliver. The knowledge thus acquired of the disposition of the house and the number of its inmates occasionally proved useful to a gang of cut-throats, and many a poor householder was murdered, thanks to his wife's love for sweet cakes. The climax was reached when the great highwayman Cartouche began his raids on the capital by means of accomplices disguised as *oublieurs*. The police then thought it time to interfere, and the trade was prohibited early in the eighteenth century.

The shops frequented by fashionable people were those under the arcading of the *Palais de Justice*. Here stood a long row of tables on which was displayed every kind of merchandise. Collars, gloves, hats, the latest trifles in ties, in literature, in perfumes, were arranged with careful art on shelves against the wall. Abraham Bosse has taken care that we shall know all about seventeenth-century shopping. In his engravings are to be seen the bare-headed shop-girls and their hatted male assistants displaying scarves and neatly tying up parcels with string. We cannot hear their united voices raised in praise of their commodities, nor can we see them making sallies into the open thoroughfare to seize the hands of hesitating purchasers. Here is a provincial in whose eye lurks the expression of one searching for a present for his lady-love. The shop-girl has him by the arm before he can beat a retreat. Gilt buttons, fans with Cupids (Madame de Sévigné preferred them with chimney-sweeps), a scarlet belt with large rosette are dangled before the bewildered young man.

"Sir," cries the seller—

"I have Dutch lawn, all fine and new,  
Cuffs and wondrous collars too,  
Jabots, stockings of the best.  
Will it please you buy a vest?  
Hither, sir! come here to me!  
Come view my goods, how cheap they be!"



SHOPPING IN THE ARCADE  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY A. BOISSE





Lovers meet behind the pillars, children and dogs romp in and out between the stalls. Purchasers carrying large parcels drop them at intervals upon the filthy floor. The noise is excruciating, and the mingled odour of dust and Spanish gloves fills the air. The provincial escapes into the comparative quiet of the garden outside, and strolls towards the Pont-Neuf. It is a time of drought, and on the way he meets the chief jewellers of Paris, crowned with roses, bearing the reliquary of Sainte Geneviève and chanting litanies for rain. If peace rather than rain be desired, it is the body of Saint Germain that is carried by thirty-six barefooted bourgeois, wearing albs and crowned with flowers. Before them through the mud go eight hundred children dressed in white, and very tired, because, although the starting hour was 8 A.M., they will not return to the abbey till 3 P.M. Madame de Sévigné witnessed such a procession in 1675. "Do you know," writes she, "that this procession is really very fine? Monks of every order walk in it, and all the parish clergy and the canons of Notre-Dame, his Grace the Archbishop, in pontifical robes, on foot, and blessing the people right and left all the way to the cathedral. However he walks only on the left side. On the right walks the Abbot of Sainte-Geneviève, barefooted, preceded by 150 monks, also barefooted. He has a mitre and crosier, like the Archbishop, and blesses the people in the same way, but modestly and devoutly. He is fasting, and wears an air of penitence which proclaims the fact that he is going to celebrate Mass in Notre-Dame. The Parliament in red robes and all the higher guilds follow the shrine, which sparkles with precious stones, and is carried by twenty-two barefooted men clad in white. The head of the merchant guilds and five councillors are left as hostages at the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève until the return of that priceless treasure."

At nightfall, when all true men had gone to bed, the streets took on another tone. Dark shapes, in twos and threes, now flitted from one blind alley to another. From

their haunts in the *Cour des Miracles* on the Rue de la Truanderie there emerged "messieurs les assassins" and their friends of the great society of thieves. Even on the accession of Henri IV. the police had declared their inability to check the "ravages" of discharged soldiers; and by the time the Fronde had added to the number of paupers, the percentage of criminals in the capital was such as to alarm beyond measure all wealthy citizens. Murders and assaults took place in the daytime. It was believed that from eight to ten thousand ruffians haunted the streets. They were divided into societies, each of which was addicted to a particular form of theft. Each band had its captain, its term of apprenticeship, its distinctive dress (!). The last test to which a candidate for admission was obliged to submit was a really hard one. He was led by his confederates to some public place, and told off to rob a given person. As soon as he had filched the purse or scarf desired, his friends raised the hue and cry against him, and if possible attacked him with sticks. He who could escape without revealing his acquaintance with the instigators was deemed a past-master in the noble art of thieving, and was admitted as such into criminal society.

The darkness of the streets, and the inadequacy and timidity of the watch, left such persons free to carry on their trade with almost perfect impunity. The ordinance compelling each citizen to place a lighted candle in his window had become a dead letter early in the century, and street lamps were not introduced until 1667. During the intervening period the murderers and cloak-snatchers enjoyed a blessed peace. Hence the particular hatred felt by them for the Chief of Police, La Reynie, who invented these lamps. Begging in the streets had already been forbidden in 1656 without much result. La Reynie, immediately after his appointment in 1667, closed *La Cour des Miracles*, deported the worst criminals to the American Islands, lighted the streets, and instructed scavengers to clear away the mud at regular intervals. Hitherto the police organisation of

the capital had been very defective. It was La Reynie's work to improve it, and to raise his office from a subordinate position to a height of importance undreamt of by his predecessors. Gabriel-Nicholas de la Reynie was a scholar of no mean attainments. He was at the same time a person of distinguished manners. Above all, he was a man of upright character, simple, religious, loyal, kind-hearted, and conscientious. Wanting these virtues he would have been a happier man. His sense of duty and his personal instincts were in perpetual conflict, and after the dreadful discoveries made by him in connection with the poison mysteries he found himself in a painful dilemma. His admirable conduct all through that episode, and the almost entire extirpation of poisoners at the close of the century, was due to his prudence. But before entering on what M. Funck-Brentano rightly calls a "drama" of the most absorbing interest, a word must be said about the other reforms introduced by La Reynie. It is noteworthy that three years after his appointment an ordinance was published, mitigating the barbarity of certain punishments, and fixing an entirely new standard whereby to judge of the gravity of crimes. Sorcery, the *bête noire* of the Middle Ages, was crossed off as "nul et illusoire." M. Lacroix notes that just before this the Parliament of Rouen had apprehended thirty-four sorcerers and condemned four to be burnt. (The King commuted the sentence to banishment). Sacrilege continued to be a capital offence, but blasphemers were no longer executed. The worst that could happen to them was to lose their tongues.

With the grievous condition of prisoners he was less able to deal. The prisons were, for the most part, dark and damp mediæval fortresses, and little change, short of pulling them down, could be made in their disposition. Saint Vincent de Paul had done much for the galley-slaves. Louis XIV. desired "that prisons should be sanitary and so arranged that the health of the prisoners need not suffer." Captives of the great reign were undoubtedly allowed more air and



exercise than their predecessors, but they were required whenever possible to pay for part of their food and furniture. This was hard, considering that many of them were imprisoned on trifling or even unspecified charges. Some owed their captivity to their dangerous knowledge of other people's crimes.

But it is in connection with that extraordinary wave of criminality that swept over France in his century that La Reynie's name will be chiefly associated. The magistrate was apprised of the fact that crimes of the most horrible nature were constantly committed in the city. Investigations were set on foot with the result that the greatest families in the land were found to be implicated. The prosecution of duchesses was a thing not to be undertaken lightly; but when it was found that a complete elucidation of these mysteries would bring dishonour on the very Throne of France, proceedings were summarily brought to a close by royal order. Madame de Montespan, the mother of legitimised princes of France, stood confessed a would-be regicide. La Reynie knew it, the King knew it, Madame de Montespan was aware that they knew. The terror-stricken trio hushed up the matter between them for "the honour of France." But the favourite had cut away the ground from beneath her feet, and the final rupture of 1680, believed by many persons to have arisen from a lovers' quarrel, had a far more serious origin. Bourdaloue's "blows to right and left" were directed with intention. The priest knew much not even known to the police, and had, no doubt, learnt something of what went on in sorcerers' dens from the lips of their victims, or from the repentant sorcerers themselves.

The drama began in August 1672, when Commissioners were sent to place seals on the property of a gentleman named Sainte-Croix, who had died greatly in debt at his obscure residence in Picpus. Discoveries then made by the affrighted officials led to the arrest of Marie-Madeleine, Marquise de Brinvilliers, and the police thus accidentally laid their hand on one of the greatest criminals ever known.

Marie-Madeleine d'Aubrey was the daughter of a virtuous father and a noble House. Her education had been so good that she was able to spell correctly. About religion she knew nothing, and from her earliest childhood she appears to have been without moral instinct. Thus the Comte, afterwards Marquis de Brinvilliers, who married her in 1651, found himself the husband of a brilliant, beautiful, wealthy, but entirely unprincipled wife. She was, however, by nature obliging, and did all she could to retain the affection of her husband by means of flattering attentions and personal attraction. Her gaiety, her natural politeness, her fearlessness, and above all her radiant complexion, abundant chestnut hair and "perfectly beautiful eyes" earned for her the admiration of a vast number of friends. Even the priest who attended her at her death observed that except when anger contracted her brows into a scowl, it would be impossible to imagine a more charming person. "She was very small and delicately made, and very sensitive in matters of honour."

All went well for eight years. In 1659 M. de Brinvilliers in an evil moment introduced into his house a cavalry officer, whose wit and marvellous facility in all sciences at once recommended him to the Marquise. This soldier, who could "discourse divinely about a God in whom he did not believe," and who was as much famed for the hymns he is said to have written as for his recklessness at cards, was none other than the infamous Sainte-Croix. He soon became the acknowledged lover of Marie-Madeleine, who squandered much money on his entertainment, and flaunted him openly in the face of her husband and father. The former was a timid man absorbed in his own amusements, and took little heed of domestic affairs. The latter resented his daughter's conduct, not only on account of his principles and honourable antecedents, but also on account of his official position as Councillor of State and Civil Lieutenant of the City of Paris. To remonstrate with his daughter was vain. He therefore obtained a *lettre de cachet*, which was the trump-card held by

angry parents in that authoritative century. Sainte-Croix spent two months in the Bastille, while his mistress's resentment against d'Aubrey fed upon itself and daily grew in strength. By the time of Sainte-Croix's release, Madame de Brinvilliers had determined to get rid of her father. To use ordinary poisons would have shown a clumsiness that the couple would have scorned. A preparation of arsenic was therefore secretly procured from a chemist named Glaser. The powder was then sprinkled on cakes, ham, and fruit, which were offered in the most generous manner to the servants or to the patients in hospital whom the great lady visited.\* The death of so many of the Marquise's acquaintances did not as yet arouse suspicion, nor did the strange illness of M. d'Aubrey in 1666 awaken any sentiment in the witnesses except one of admiration for the kind attentions of his devoted daughter. After eight months of suffering the father died. (His constitution must indeed have been strong to have so long resisted the effects of the twenty-eight or thirty doses of poison which the Marquise later confessed to having given him.)

His heir was Madame de Brinvilliers' elder brother. Money being very necessary to the Marquise, both he and a younger brother were subjected to a three months' course of poisoning, which proved fatal to them in 1670. The excitement of the risk had now mounted to her head, and her husband, her daughter and her sister-in-law, all narrowly missed being poisoned. There is extant a description of the meals at her table. In it the mistress and the lover are depicted practising the fine art of conversation at their ease, while M. de Brinvilliers sits like a trembling mortal who has stumbled unawares into a ghoulish feast. He ate every mouthful in fear of his life, and would only drink from a glass which his faithful servant rinsed each time before filling it. He had, however, an unexpected ally in his wife's lover. Sainte-Croix was not anxious to be able to marry Madame de Brinvilliers, and tried to save himself by giving the husband

\* This was done in order to see whether the poison left any trace.



an antidote to arsenic. A series of quarrels with another lover, Briancourt, were meanwhile occupying the Marquise's energies, and Briancourt himself only escaped both the dagger and the cup by an extraordinary stroke of good fortune. The lady also had a dispute with Sainte-Croix about some written promises of money which he had locked up in a box together with several incriminating letters from her, and which not even threats of stabbing would induce him to return.

The climax of the drama was reached on 30th July 1672, when Sainte-Croix died while making a chemical experiment in his rooms at Picpus. This brings us to the point at which the story is introduced a few pages back. On hearing of her lover's death the Marquise exclaimed in terror: "The little box!" But it was too late to take action. The police had already placed seals on the dead man's goods. The thirty-four letters and the small phials in the box might, however, have escaped careful scrutiny, had not Madame de Brinvilliers displayed so great an anxiety about them. She clamoured for them, called on all the officials concerned, and said she could not rest without the letters. In fact, she so entirely succeeded in rousing the suspicions of the police that when the box was opened and the phials found, the contents were at once tried on an animal. The animal died. The letters alone would have sufficed to convict her, and Madame de Brinvilliers fled to London. In the following year an order to extradite her was issued, and the criminal escaped to Holland, there to endure over two years of daily fear of capture. Then the day of vengeance came, and she was arrested on 25th March 1676, in a convent at Liège. Her trial stirred Parisian society to the very depths. Of her end it is not here the place to speak. She died with courage and with a repentance that had every appearance of being sincere. The town breathed again, shortly forgot all about her, and returned to the discussion of more permanent scandals.

The episode was, however, not over. La Reynie was informed by the canons of the Metropolitan Church



“that most of the people who had latterly confessed to them had accused themselves of having poisoned some one.” Further, a note announcing an attempt on the life of the Dauphin was found in a Jesuit confessional. La Reynie was much troubled by these revelations and his own inability to discover the *fons et origo* of the whole movement. This was revealed to him in a manner at once simple and surprising. An obscure hanger-on of the law, named Perrin, was invited to dinner by an acquaintance of his, named Vigoureux, who pursued the harmless trade of a ladies’ tailor. Perrin went and found the meal a festive one. Among the guests was a loud and cheerful person named Marie Bosse, who set and kept the table in a roar. She was by profession a fortune-teller. Towards the end of the meal she grew a little incoherent and ended by exclaiming: “Only three more poisonings and I shall retire from business.” Perrin would have taken this for drunken raving, had not his hostess scowled with fury at the babbler. He therefore thought it best to behave as if he had understood nothing, and at the same time to communicate his suspicions to the police. The latter at once sent a trustworthy woman to reconnoitre in the enemy’s land. This woman called on Marie Bosse, drew a harrowing picture of her husband’s cruelty, and asked if there were no method of escaping from it. Sure enough, she returned from the second visit with a phial of poison for the poor man. The police then arrested Marie Bosse and several of her confederates. One of them was seized on her way from Mass. This was the notorious Catherine Deshayes, called La Voisin. From the examination of the prisoners, the police educed the following facts. Paris contained, not one or two, but many persons who made a profession of murder and infanticide. La Voisin herself had an enormous *clientèle* among the highest ladies in the land. She sold love potions and charms for desirable lovers. She concocted poisons for inconvenient relations, and cast spells over the enemies of her clients by means of black masses celebrated by an abandoned priest, named Guibourg. The amount of

money thus earned by La Voisin must have been large, for the very cloak in which she "officiated" is said by M. Funck-Brentano to have cost 75,000 francs of present money. It was made of crimson velvet, sewn with 205 gold eagles. With it she wore a skirt of water-green velvet, draped with lace, and shoes also adorned with eagles. So arrayed, she dealt forth death with the most perfect serenity. Of her family she was genuinely fond, and her only aim in business was to provide a proper competence for her children.

A special Commission, dubbed *La chambre ardente*, because it sat by candlelight, was appointed to try the sorcerers. The Commission sat (with certain intervals) from 10th April 1679 to 21st July 1682, and tried the 218 sorcerers arrested during that period. Then it was suddenly and unaccountably closed. Sorcerers not as yet executed were set free or immured in fortresses, the governors of which were bidden to turn a deaf ear to their "ravings." It was not till a much later date that the reason for so arbitrary a use of the royal prerogative became known. The truth was that the Chief of Police had learnt from the independent testimony of several prisoners that Madame de Montespan had been one of their most assiduous visitors. It was revealed that she had been present at the saying of black masses to obtain the death of Mademoiselle de la Vallière and to win the King's undivided love; that she had practised every kind of abomination to gain these two ends; finally, that in despair at her lack of success, she had tried to kill the King. Louis was greatly startled. It must, nevertheless, be said to his honour that he was more shocked at the insult offered to France than at that to his own person. Europe must never know of the crimes with which the mother of his children was charged. Certain records of the proceedings in the *chambre ardente* were sent for and burnt by the King in his own fireplace. La Reynie's scribbled notes, which no one thought of burning, alone remain to tell the tale of the black masses.\*

The historic scene between Madame de Montespan and

\* See M. Funck-Brentano's admirable book, *Le Drame des Poisons*.

the King, which took place in 1680, was the one in which both raised their masks. The rupture was final, though it was also gradual for the sake of appearances. Few persons knew its real causes. The Court still jested on the subject of poison. "No one has as yet accused me of poisoning *maman mignonne*, which is no small distinction at the present time," wrote Charles de Sévigné to his sister. Fear of magic grew less and at last entirely evaporated. Even among the lower classes the passion for fortune-telling declined, thanks to the ridicule heaped upon superstitious dupes in the play written by Donneau de Visé and Thomas Corneille in 1679 at the request of La Reynie. It will be left to a century even later than the present to extirpate such folly altogether.



'CHAMBRE DES APPARTEMENTS'

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY TROUVAIN





## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROBLEM OF THE POOR IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND THE EFFORTS MADE TO SOLVE IT

A STUDENT of seventeenth-century thought cannot but marvel at the merciless way in which certain theories are tracked to their ultimate conclusion. The public mind was totally unable to detect fallacies in a proposition having a cherished principle for its premise. It leapt to conclusions with a daring and a disregard of circumstances which would have been ridiculous, had the consequences of such logic not so often proved fatal. The guiding star of seventeenth-century social life was a belief in the Divine Right of Kings to absolute power. A natural inference drawn from this belief is the assumption that might is right, primarily in the case of kings, secondly in that of persons deriving their power from them. The King, the nobles and the Church had official standing and definite rights. The merchant and townsman subsisted mostly on privileges painfully acquired, but now confirmed by law. "There is," we learn from a seventeenth-century historian, "also a fourth class in the state; namely, the peasant; but *he* has nothing of much importance to say."

The distribution of power implied in these class distinctions was, according to seventeenth-century ethics, most emphatically ordained of God. Even the clergy acquiesced in the view that a man need not leave his rank at the church door, although feeble protests were made when a quarrel about precedence ended in a free fight up and down the aisles. "Poverty," said the comfortable Duchesses to their sons, the future prelates of France, "is the result of original sin: to seek to make a radical change in the relations between persons of quality and the mob would therefore be worse

than absurd: it would be impious. The proper attitude for the poor is one of resignation, coupled with a proper gratitude for the benevolent alms of the rich. The exercise of charity is incumbent on the rich as a duty to themselves; the poor have no right to demand it as their due." The principle of mutual obligation was not firmly grasped until the days of Rousseau and the Encyclopædists. Few people in the great century were so far ahead of it as to suppose that luxuries and even luxurious necessities could and ought to be cut off, for the benefit of others. During the worst period of misery that France has ever known, Angélique Arnauld, the great Abbess of Port-Royal, wrote to her friend, the Queen of Poland: "Imagine, Madame, that in the midst of all the ills with which your Majesty knows us to be surrounded, the details of which cannot be contemplated without horror, people still go to the theatre. In fact, all who are not as yet themselves a prey to anguish, have so little pity for their brethren, that they run after amusement as eagerly as in time of peace."

It is impossible to conceive the mental suffering of good men in that cruel age, since even the laconic catalogue of its everyday events inspire more pity and terror than the most Aristotelian of tragedies. Fear was upon every side. There was no safety from men more inhuman than demons, and those who died by the sword and by pestilence were accounted happy by the survivors. As the century advanced, infection spread gradually from class to class, so that by 1709, that year in which plague, floods and want united to cut France away from among the nations, the old King himself was fain to sell his gold plate and eat the bread of famine in his fast emptying palace.

At first only the poor had suffered. Next, the merchants were ruined. Destitution then spread to the country nobles, many of whom begged their bread in vain along the deserted roads. Finally, those among the rich who had freely spent their substance in feeding the starving, were themselves reduced to the last stage of destitution. Even love of

pleasure died of inanition, for people who danced through half the century were compelled to "go softly," when even in the treasury there was no money left. The very framework and safeguards of society were destroyed. Marriage and funeral - registers were not kept for long periods in certain places. Legitimacy could not be proved, and heirs were unable to claim their inheritance in those rare instances when the wars had left them anything to inherit.

The causes of this universal agony were very numerous, and only too well calculated to work as it were into each other's hands.

The wars of religion had effectually emptied the exchequer. During the siege of Paris in 1590, a census was taken of the number of people to be provided for, and the returns showed that the city contained 260,000 people, of whom 3000 were refugees from the country. Two months later it was ascertained that of these 123,000 were penniless, while 7000 had money, but could find no bread to buy. The Government could devise no remedy for national poverty, except increased taxation. Of such taxes, that on salt was the most onerous. Each family was forced to buy salt in proportion to the number of its members, at a very high price, and peasants living near the sea were forbidden to use sea-water for cooking.

By 1684, the salt tax had amounted to 26,000,000 livres; that known as the *taille* to 38,000,000 livres, and on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, both increased yearly, although the population itself had decreased by one-tenth. As early as 1634, the estates of Normandy complained that "the *taille* has increased to such a point that the poor have been deprived of their very shirts, and in many places women cannot go to church for lack of all clothing." Persons unable to pay were deprived of everything they possessed. When their horses had been taken, the peasants made a last effort to carry on agriculture by dragging their carts themselves. In the worst years of the Fronde, one even reads of priests



who harnessed themselves to the plough as a means of saving their parishioners from famine.

But besides the Government taxes, the peasant was obliged to satisfy the numerous feudal claims of his landlord, who himself paid no *taille*. There was a tax on grain for the lord's hounds. Each peasant was compelled to work on the lord's land a certain number of days a week. He was obliged to pay a percentage on the fruit of the soil he cultivated. He had to furnish lodging if it were required. He might not kill wild beasts, or rabbits, or pigeons. Poultry was also reserved for the use of the manor. The fishing industry was in its infancy, and potatoes were hardly known. One historian asserts that even at the end of the century the average meat consumed per head in France was one pound a month: and as the rich ate it every day, an enormous number of people must never have tasted it at all. Another describes the bread commonly eaten by the peasant as unfit for consumption. It was made of barley and oats mixed, and prepared in such a way that one could lift it by the pieces of straw left in it. To rebel was useless. Risings in Guienne, Auvergne, Normandy, and in 1643 a very serious outbreak in Rouergue, were all quelled without mercy. Finally, the peasant sank into one of two states: either he let himself and his children die without an effort at retaliation, or he became a highwayman and killed the passers-by for food.

Warfare was almost continuous throughout the first part of the century. No sooner had the country begun to recover from the effects of the religious struggle, than the Thirty Years' War again plunged it into misery. The French period lasted from about 1635 to 1643, and constant rebellions connected this series of disasters with those of the Fronde, which extended from 1648 to 1653.

All parts of the country were affected, but Lorraine and Picardy suffered more severely, because they were frontier provinces, and thus fell a ready prey to the unspeakable cruelty of the "allies" that each party summoned in turn. In 1632 the Franche-Comté was laid waste by Gaston, and

in 1636 Lorraine was devastated by a horde of Swedes, while Picardy fell a prey to a Spanish army. It should be stated that the rapacity of the armies was partly due to the fact that they were never paid. Rosen-Worms, the successor of Erlach, himself writes: "It is now five years since I received either my pay or my pension, so that I have to live like a beggar, and can neither keep a proper table nor dress my servants." The plague, which had broken out in 1606 and 1623, raged without intermission from Easter 1630 to Easter 1635. During that period 600,000 persons met with an unnatural death in Lorraine alone. 1650 was the worst year of the pestilence ever known, and a large number of persons succumbed to the disease, owing to physical degeneration. Most of them had never enjoyed proper or sufficient food, although they toiled all day and nearly all night. The corn was trampled down or stolen by marauding soldiers, who killed the husbandmen, until at last there was no corn left to sow. All through this long period there was great scarcity, but the worst famines occurred in 1631, 1633, 1635, 1648, 1652, 1660, and 1662. In 1651 and 1657 there were terrible floods, and in the latter year so great cold, that the few remaining vines were frozen and the cattle died. In 1709 carts could drive over the Seine and the drinking-water on the royal sideboards froze. Bottles brought up from the kitchen were covered with icicles. Wolves entered villages in broad daylight and carried off women and children. Travellers reaching lonely hamlets and hoping for entertainment found the deserted houses tenanted by wild beasts come to devour the bodies of the dead inhabitants.

The price of food rose ever higher. The day-book of one Hugues Bois de Chesne, citizen of Montbéliard, contains a chart of the prices of corn, beginning in 1618 and carried on through the worst years of famine. The climax occurs in 1636, when the writer states that "on Saturday, 15th September, corn may not be bought for money." In 1652, bread in Paris cost one écu the loaf. In Lorraine the poor were thankful to have acorns and roots and grass to eat. After

1659 corn became cheaper again, but it took many years for normal conditions to be re-established all over the country.

The universal confusion resulting from such a state of things beggars description. The excellent account of it in M. Feillet's *Misère au temps de la Fronde et Saint Vincent de Paul*, or the grim and cruel engravings of Jacques Callot, furnish one with a picture of the vast wilderness that France then was. But perhaps the most faithful because the simplest descriptions occur in the *Relations* published by the Estates of Normandy and other provinces, or by the missionaries sent by Saint Vincent de Paul into the worst districts. Much valuable information is also to be found in the letters of the Abbess of Port-Royal. For instance, on 16th July 1652, she writes: "People massacre each other daily with every sort of cruelty. . . . The soldiers steal from one another when they have denuded every one else, and as they spoil more property than they carry off, they are themselves often reduced to starvation, and can find no more to annex. All the armies are equally undisciplined and vie with one another in lawlessness. The authorities in Paris are trying to send back the peasants to gather in the corn; but as soon as it is reaped the marauders come to slay and steal, and disperse all in a general rout."

In January 1649 she writes: "This poor country is a horrible sight; it is stripped of everything. The soldiers take possession of the farms and have the corn threshed, but will not give a single grain to the owners who beg it as an alms. It is impossible to plough. There are no more horses—all have been carried off. The peasants are reduced to sleeping in the woods and are thankful to have them as a refuge from murderers. And if they only had enough bread to half satisfy their hunger, they would indeed count themselves happy." With regard to the famine bread she says to her Sisters: "I send you a piece of the bread the poor eat, so that you may see to what extremities they are reduced. We do nothing but see poor people who come and tell us that they have not tasted food for two or three days, while others say



they have been living on cabbages boiled without salt. I beg you to show this bread to our Sisters, so that they may do all in their power to cut down their own expenses, as I have so often enjoined on you. [Let us do this] so that we may not ourselves need succour at the expense of the poor" (March 1652).

In Paris itself even greater misery prevailed. The agreement made by nearly all the armies to respect the district lying within a radius of ten miles of the capital had not been fulfilled. At Sussy, for instance, the inhabitants had put their household goods into the church for safety, but the Lorraine marauders broke in and destroyed everything. Madame de la Guette, who witnessed the episode, says that they wantonly ripped up the beds, so that one could walk up the nave on feathers reaching half-way up one's legs.

Refugees flocked in from the country, and in 1652 there were 100,000 beggars in the capital. These persons mostly slept in the streets, and the mortality among them was very great. In six faubourgs there were 12,000 destitute families. "I have seen," says La Porte, "on the bridge at Meulun . . . three children crawling over their dead mother, one of them still trying to derive food from her."

Armed affrays constantly took place in the dark streets, and the police were quite unable to control the mob. As late as 1709, Monseigneur the Dauphin was attacked on his way from the Opera by a crowd demanding bread. So threatening was its attitude that the royal escort was afraid to force a way through. The prince himself flung handfuls of money into the crowd, and fluently promised everything demanded. The only result of this episode was that the Dauphin did not dare to show himself in Paris for a considerable time, since he was not willing, nor indeed able, to carry out the promises wrung from him in a moment of danger.

Of course the classes who suffered most from the general misery were those officially termed "the poor"—that is to say, the labouring classes in the country and the artisans and small tradespeople in the towns. But the failure of crops



and the destruction of cattle on which the gentlemen farmers depended entirely for subsistence, soon reduced many of the poorer nobles to absolute destitution. Saint Vincent's *Relation* for 1651 contains this passage: "The poorer nobles also need succour, as they have not suffered less than others. For in addition to being without food, money and covering, and reduced to sleeping on straw, they suffer the anguish of being ashamed to beg from door to door. Besides, who is there left from whom to beg, seeing that the war has established equality among all: I mean to say, the equality of misery." The request of one gentleman begging for his sick daughter was refused on the plea that there was only enough for "the poor." His reply was that no one could be poorer than he, since he had not been able to give his child anything but water for two days. Angélique also bears witness on this point. "1st April 1654. The current of charitable effort in this district has been diverted, for it is not the ordinary poor who at present suffer want: on the contrary, the mortality caused by the wars and the high price of corn during the past years, in addition to the increase in corn last year, have improved their state. For their numbers being reduced, employers have great difficulty in finding artisans and labourers for farm work. The wages are consequently doubled, and a man may now earn enough in one day to live a week.\* The poor of the present moment are therefore the lesser country gentlemen whose houses have been pillaged and destroyed, and the labourers who have suffered a like fate, as well as that of having been drained of their last penny by taxes." The clergy suffered with their flocks, and the poverty of religious communities, who had used up their stores at an early stage of the war in succouring their tenants, was so great, that the King ordered rations of bread to be distributed to monks and nuns as to his soldiers.† Church plate was melted down and sold to buy food.

At Port-Royal the greatest confusion prevailed. "Our

\* This affluence was very short-lived.

† Only in certain towns.

church," says Angélique in April 1649, "was so full of oats, peas, beans, furniture, and all kinds of rags that we had to walk on them to get to the choir, and the floor was paved with books belonging to our gentlemen.\* The barns were full of wounded persons, and if the weather had not been severe, I think the plague would have broken out. The cold was a great affliction, because our wood ran short, and we did not dare to go and look for more. . . ." Marauding troops of soldiers infested the neighbourhood. On the approach of such a band the Abbess writes: "Forty of us women were surrounded here . . . but . . . the gentlemen of Port-Royal girded on their swords to defend us, and made strong barricades."

All nuns were not equally fortunate. One soldier who died in hospital declared that of all his crimes the one that weighed most heavily upon him was his murder of a nun. She had tried to escape from him by climbing up the screen in the chapel and clinging on to the crucifix on the top of it. The sight so enraged him that he shot her where she was. It would be useless to multiply instances and quotations from the letters of horrified eye-witnesses of these occurrences. All are unanimous in asserting that as the century advanced, poverty crept higher up the social scale, so that in the worst years of the Fronde the entire nation, except the very rich, was reduced to a gloomy and bitter despair.

But if the misfortunes which all shared in common called forth the worst passions of miserable men, they also drew out the most heroic qualities of a people singularly fertile in the production of both saints and philanthropists. The energy displayed by the public benefactors of the period is no less remarkable than were the economic conditions which called their activities into play. The incredible things done by great ladies for the poor, and the cheapness at which life was rated in their service, testify to a degree of unselfishness which is simply grand. All classes contributed, and all sections of the community shared in this charitable work.

\* The "Solitaries."

Royal and official institutions were founded and reformed. The Queen-Mother and Court, once persuaded that the matter was of moment and must be taken seriously, began with remorse to take steps they should have taken years before, but which even now were not too late. Private persons organised charitable societies and also worked independently. Above all, Vincent de Paul kindled a fire of which we feel the heat unto this day.

Of public institutions there is little to be said. On the accession of Henri IV. there was only one hospital in the capital, the Hôtel-Dieu. The accommodation afforded by it was entirely mediæval as regards dirt and discomfort. Sick persons who had the misfortune to find the hospital full died in the streets. Those who had the even greater misfortune of gaining admission, were sometimes placed in a bed with six other persons, all dying of different diseases. At busy periods the plague broke out as a matter of course; and at no time was the nursing of such a nature as to ensure any reasonable hope of the patient's recovery. Still the Hôtel-Dieu was the only institution of its kind, and in 1606 the prevalence of the plague caused the King to have the house enlarged at his expense. In the Faubourg Saint-Germain there was a community of the congregation of Saint-John of God, introduced from Florence by Marie de' Medici and patronised by the Court. Infectious diseases were chiefly dealt with in an ancient hospice in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel, founded by Marguerite de Provence and reorganised by Henri IV. But the medical aid afforded by these institutions being inadequate, Henri ended by endowing a separate and very splendid foundation, namely the great Hôpital Saint-Louis. This present to his people cost the jolly King a sum equivalent to about three million francs of the present day.

Charitable associations were formed by magistrates in Paris as well as in the provinces. Certain of these, notably the famous Mathieu Molé, Premier Président du Parliement, tried the effect of a personal appeal to the Queen, who was



thoughtless rather than hard-hearted. The King's armies were perhaps more cruel than any, and it was felt that if the royal family could be aroused, or the nobles weaned from their craving for selfish warfare, France might yet be saved. In 1648 a pithy account of the state of affairs in the provinces was transmitted to the Queen. Various anecdotes were roundly told her. Various sad pictures, such as that of a woman found dead with a live baby at her breast and her mouth full of grass, were put before the Queen's eyes, and the appeal ended with the words—"We pray you, Madame, to give some thought to this public misery. This evening in the solitude of your oratory, reflect on the calamities of these conquered provinces in which it is impossible to provide food for the starving."

Such representations seem to have been not without effect, for Charles Maignart de Bernières, an official in the parliament of Rouen, who took his duties very much to heart, states in his weekly report: "Several ladies have sold their jewels and their plate to fulfil their obligations as Christians, and even the Queen at once gave up her earrings, which realised 16,000 livres. This action ought to call up a blush on the cheeks of all those princesses and ladies who wear on their persons enough to satisfy the crying needs of a whole province."

But these movements towards self-sacrifice were only spasmodic, and in 1652 the Abbess of Port-Royal wrote to the Queen of Poland: "Except for the small number of good souls who give themselves up to philanthropic work, everyone is as much as ever in the lap of luxury. The Court and the Tuileries are crowded as of old. Feasts and other unnecessary revellings go on as usual, and the thought of the horrible misfortune with which the streets are filled, of the murders so common there and at the gates, and of the high price demanded for everything, is quite unable to touch men's hearts or cause them to fear the wrath of God."

Another writer grimly chronicling the doings of the Court in the same year, states that the King is still amusing himself



at tournaments and balls, while the Queen continues her interminable prayers without giving a thought to the good works they should bring forth. Finally, an unknown and indignant rhymster puts the following couplet into the King's mouth :—

“ Si la France est en deuil, qu'elle pleure et soupire ;  
Pour moi, je veux danser, galantiser et rire.”

The first sections of society to organise charity were the Jansenists and the parliamentary class, with Mère Angélique and M. de Bernières of Rouen at their head ; but on the advent of Saint Vincent de Paul, this enthusiasm spread beyond class and sect limits, and grew as Catholic as love itself. The whole movement was systematised, and consequently more effectual. The plan of campaign advocated by the leaders is highly instructive. The first thing to be done was to devise a suitable working rule for the guidance of the charitable. Promoters of various schemes now proceeded to embody them in a series of very interesting pamphlets and books. Bernières issued an excellent book entitled *L'Aumône chrétienne et ecclésiastique*, in 1651, and an *Exhortation . . . sur les secours des pauvres* appeared in 1652. A Jesuit soon followed with *Le Chrétien charitable*, and besides this, every private committee issued rules of conduct to its members. Such rules are embodied in an “Order to be observed in visiting the *pauvres honteux*” (i.e., those who had seen better circumstances, and were trying to hide their poverty). Visitors are directed to find out the particular reason, if any, why the family is poor. If the case is a genuine one, work is to be found for the parents. Furniture stamped with a parochial mark is to be lent if necessary ; creditors are to be compounded with, the daughters apprenticed, and the family, if lapsed, is to be induced to attend to its religious duties. Money is only to be given under exceptional circumstances. From this to mediæval charity it is indeed a far cry. A committee of chosen citizens also met for a considerable period on Mondays and Saturdays to sift out genuine cases from those of impostors. A parliamentary official directed the proceedings.

The number of private persons who laboured among the poor was very large, and it is impossible to record all their names. Olier, Curé of Saint-Sulpice, began in 1648 to apprentice the orphans of his parish, and opened as well a house for friendless girls. A corporation of butchers undertook to give presents of meat to the poor. One man who could ill afford it is described as giving a barrel of salt. The charity of another benefactor was very touching: "On ne doit pas mettre en oubli le présent d'une pauvre femme qui, donnant sa garde-robe et ses souliers, retournait pieds nus ; sur ce qu'on lui dit qu'elle avait plus besoin de recevoir que de donner, elle répondit en simplicité de cœur, qu'elle donnait son meilleur."

Madame de Bullion, widow of a Superintendent of the Finances, anonymously founded a convalescent home. Others instituted lay communities to provide women to nurse in the women's wards in the hospitals. Abraham Bosse has a pleasing engraving of the Infirmary of the Hospice de la Charité, in which is shown the great hall with its curtained four-posters between each window. The altar, surmounted by a cross, occupies one end, and at the other is a table laden with dishes, and surrounded by a miscellaneous crowd of monks, ladies, gentlemen, and servants.

Among those especially distinguished for their goodness at this period is Marguerite de Gondi, Marquise de Maignelais, and aunt of the troublesome boys tutored by Saint Vincent de Paul. Her husband had been murdered three years after her marriage, when she was but twenty. On the death of her only son, she retired into the great nunnery at Poissy, then notorious for the number of high-born and worldly nuns and boarders it contained. Here Madame de Maignelais showed herself ready to receive and succour all with cheerful courtesy. She proved in her own person that noble birth is not incompatible with menial work and the sweeping of rooms. Her dresses were of grey or purple wool. Her possessions, down to her very looking-glass, were sold for charity. The carriages, too, were sold, except one hung with

plain cloth, which she needed to convey her round the slums of Paris on her errands of mercy. A part of her great fortune she used for the poor; another part was given to ruined monasteries and the destitute clergy, and the last, by far the smallest, was used for the maintenance of the house she subsequently lived in. Her guests were invariably poor people, penniless nobles and bankrupt citizens, all of whom were received according to their proper rank. On her rounds out of doors she was sometimes accompanied by her young nephew, the future Cardinal de Retz, whose one aim at this period was to keep himself well before the eyes of the public, so that he might be in a position to collect a party against Mazarin. "Every day," he writes, "I allowed my aunt to drag me into slums and garrets, and I often saw very well-dressed people, and sometimes well-known ones, who came in secret to receive alms. I did not play the pious person, because I was not certain how long I could keep it up; but I made much of them that feared the Lord, and to do so is, in their opinion, one of the chief indications of godliness."

A great part of the day was spent by Madame de Maignelais in visiting the Hôtel-Dieu, whence she collected all the destitute girls that daily flocked in. Some she dowered and married to respectable tradespeople, while those who desired it were enabled to enter a convent. Whenever possible, she kept poor homes together by paying the rent. The great excellence of all this work consisted in the fact that it was done regularly, and the continuance of help once received might be counted upon. Her whole life was spent in the dark places of the great city. In church she sat in the free seats (a practice almost unheard of at that period). Perhaps the greatest effort she felt called upon to make was in connection with the prisons, the abominable squalor of which is a blot on seventeenth-century administration. It was her habit to talk with prisoners kindly, naturally and without cant. She never asked what crimes they were charged with, but if she knew from other sources that they were imprisoned for debt, she procured the sum necessary for



their release from a fund given for the purpose by Marie de' Medici. To prisoners condemned to death she would say at the end of her visit: "And now, my dear friend, so that you may not go to God with an anxious mind, are there no near relations of yours to whom I might be of use? I should be very glad to do anything I can for them." Their names and addresses were then written on her tablets, and she never failed to do her utmost for them.

Four years before her death Madame de Maignelais became blind. The only allusion she was ever known to make to this affliction was: "Now I shall have less distraction in prayer."

This great lady worked chiefly in the earlier years of the century. Her work was continued by Madame de Miramion, who had her house full of little orphans in 1650, and in 1651 gave away 2000 portions of soup. Her funds having run short in 1652, she sold her famous pearl necklace for 24,000 francs. This sum also having melted away, her silver plate followed during the next year.

Much good was also done by Anne-Marie Martinozzi, niece of Mazarin and wife of Armand de Conti. This poor girl was originally affianced to the Duc de Candale. But the Duc had enjoyed his bachelorhood so much that he went on postponing his marriage until his *fiancée* was taken from him and offered to Condé's brother, Conti. This prince had intimated that he wished to marry a relation of the cardinal's, he cared not which. Matrimony thus entered upon could not fail to be unfortunate, and Anne-Marie suffered much. But her gentleness was so attractive that for some years before his death in 1666, her husband began to make up for his early neglect. He joined her in work for the poor, and, being encouraged thereto by the Jansenists preachers, began a life of the most accomplished piety. On Anne-Marie's tomb were inscribed the words: "She sold all her jewels to feed the poor in Berry, Champagne, and Picardy during the famine of 1662." Saint-Beuve estimates these jewels to have been worth 60,000 francs.



Finally, at the close of the century, Saint-Simon, usually so chary of praise, signalises Madame de Pontchartrain, the Chancellor's wife, as admirable, not only on account of her wit, which stood her instead of good looks, but also on account of the munificence and graciousness of her gifts to the poor. Other public benefactors were members of the Longueville family. The Duchesse de Longueville, that too famous sister of the great Condé, having turned from the follies of her bright youth, became as remarkable for piety in her old age as she had once been for exuberance of spirits, and her charity earned for her the title of "Mother of the Church."

In the provinces charity was equally active, for there were many landowners who were neither vindictive tyrants nor thoughtless egoists. The instructions issued by charitable committees to the lords of suffering villages imply at least that the said lords were anxious to be directed in the matter. The first step was to come to an understanding with the curé. The next, to convey all sick persons to religious houses to be there nursed. For the able-bodied work was to be found or created. One pamphlet also thoughtfully includes an economical recipe for making soup for the poor. This culinary effort runs as follows: "Fill a caldron with five tubfuls of water. Cut up and throw into it 25 lbs. of bread, 7 quarterns of fat (butter on days of abstinence), 4 pints of peas or beans, half a bushel of turnips or cabbages, leeks, onions or savoury herbs, and about 14 sous worth of salt. When the mixture has boiled down to four tubfuls, it will be enough for a hundred people. Let it be distributed in a ladle containing a bowlful, *i.e.*, one portion. All this food will only cost 100 sous per hundred people, or at the most, 18 deniers ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  sous each). One ought also to add a little meat, for instance entrails of oxen, sheep or calf, which would take the place of the fat, peas and turnips, and do not cost more."

In addition to local efforts, such as the 12,000 livres for seed given by four persons in Champagne, much money was sent from the capital, until the stress even there became so

great that Saint Vincent was obliged to retain all the alms for the Parisian poor. Between September 1650 and March 1651 more than 88,000 livres were sent to Champagne and Picardy, besides agricultural implements and clothes.

Doctors gave their services and also very frequently their lives. For instance, on 6th September 1650, twenty-two doctors died and two fell ill in Paris. The medical charities of the capital were directed by one Theophraste Renaudot, who had established an association for the purpose in 1612. In 1640 the King, realising the splendid nature of this physician's work, gave him letters-patent and a free hand to do what he liked for the poor. Four years later he and five others, like-minded with himself, gathered together a number of doctors who agreed to set apart two days a-week to visit the sick poor, and to prescribe remedies, which were furnished by the faculty. In the country the same devotion was shown. Many doctors toiled day and night for the magnificent wage of fifteen sous a day. Others worked for nothing. At Beaucaire a hospital was set up outside the walls and volunteers to tend the sick were called for. Among those who responded were the monks of the neighbouring monasteries and the Huguenot minister of the place. So numerous indeed were the volunteers that a choice had to be made among them. Four Reformed Franciscans were finally chosen. They soon fell victims to the epidemic and died, and Jesuits took their place.

But all these manifold efforts, isolated though some of them seem, had their spring in that newer and more evangelical conception of ordinary Christian duty which Saint Vincent de Paul introduced to the notice of his countrymen. His pioneer in the matter had been Saint François de Sales, to whom it had first occurred to enlist the sympathies of great ladies, and to induce them to offer their time and their bodily strength as well as their money. But it was left to Vincent to convince his age that all men must, as a matter of course, present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God; that active service is as much incumbent on the laity having

no ties as it is on priests and nuns ; finally, that it is, after all, love, and not money, or position, or even intellect, that makes the world go round. In other words, he proclaimed that the friendly jest or even the courteous movement which testifies to human sympathy are as essential, if not more so, than the notorious "word in season."

Saint Vincent de Paul is indeed a hero of the Romance of Truth. Lesage or Fielding might well have sketched out his earlier life. When a child he kept his father's sheep and mused all day in the sun like the young Giotto. This pursuit he left to enter the monastery school which gave him the means to earn a precarious living as a professor, while he was training for the priesthood. His ordination took place in 1600, when he was twenty-four. Business once took him to Marseilles, whence he proposed to return by sea to Narbonne. But on the journey the ship was taken by pirates, and the crew, including Vincent, conveyed to Tunis and sold there in the slave-market. Of Vincent's three masters the last was an apostate Italian, and him the saint succeeded in converting. They escaped together and took ship to Rome, where Vincent's story roused the interest of Cardinal du Perron. Through his mediation Vincent was enabled to return to his native country as the bearer of a secret dispatch to the King. Society was attracted by his simplicity, and he was appointed almoner to Marguerite de Valois. But a man of Vincent's stamp was quite out of place in a Court where there was little opportunity for active work and none for meditation. Before long, therefore, the peasant priest in his shabby cassock ceased to frequent the royal palaces, though to his dying day he remained an honoured guest, whose counsel the King himself was not too proud to take. For a time he lived in retirement at the Oratory which the great Cardinal de Bérulle had founded for the training of priests. It was not till 1611, when he was thirty-five years old, that Vincent definitely took up pastoral work as a curé. He was, however, soon called to a sphere of action which altered the course of his future life and directed his mighty energies into



a particular and hitherto much-neglected channel. He was appointed tutor to the three sons of Emmanuel de Gondi, Master of the Galleys, that is to say, of the convict stations all over France. The power of this nobleman was considerable. His uncle was a Cardinal, and his brothers were Henri, first Cardinal de Retz and Jean-François, first Archbishop of Paris. Through his wife, Françoise Marguerite de Silly, he was also well-connected. The boys were dreadful children. To deal with pupils so imperious and unscrupulous was no easy task. At first Vincent's position in the family was that of any tutor of the period, but soon it was observed that he was no ordinary pedagogue, and Vincent became a person much regarded by both husband and wife. His influence perhaps first asserted itself with regard to a duel which the master of the house, in accordance with every law of honour and propriety then in vogue, proposed to fight. Vincent told him that this law of honour was in contradiction to the law of God, and that he would do well to have the moral courage to defy it. Gondi debated with himself throughout one night, and emerged from the mental conflict resolved to refuse the challenge. His wife, who had hardly believed such a miracle possible, never forgot that her boys' tutor had perhaps saved her husband's life. She took him for her director, and from thenceforward redoubled her already considerable efforts to help the peasants on her own estates. In this work Vincent was only too glad to take a part, and it was due to her help that he was able to develop his famous schemes for succouring the poor. These schemes afterwards resulted in the foundation of his Society of Missioners and of the Guild of the *Dames de la Charité* and the *Filles de la Charité*. These last are known to us as members of the great Order which bears his name.

The Missioners were the first to be established. The country clergy, cut off as they were from the currents of thought which keep men alive in towns, had for the most part fallen into a state of apathy. Their flocks were likewise indifferent to vital religion, because the needs of this present



life were in their case so tyrannously pressing that little energy was left for excursions into the unseen. Vincent, therefore, felt that a general mission might fan the dying embers of faith and give men a better hope than that on which they miserably battered. This project originated in 1617, when Vincent was staying with the Gondis on one of their estates not far from Amiens. Later in the same year he began with a few priests to teach in country districts, but no society was as yet founded. Madame de Gondi had already offered 16,000 livres to various orders, on condition that they would hold a mission every five years on her property; but none had seen their way to undertake the task. She therefore induced her brother-in-law, the Archbishop, to give the Hôtel des Bons-Enfants in Paris to Vincent, and thus to enable him to establish a college to train priests for this particular form of work. This was effected in 1624. Hitherto the training of the clergy had often been done at haphazard. Vincent himself records that when with the Court at Saint-Germain he had seen eight priests each say Mass in a different way. Madame de Gondi did not live long enough to behold the maturity of this foundation. She died in 1625, at the age of forty-two, having shortly before given her sons' tutor 45,000 francs for his college. Her husband subsequently retired to Bérulle's Oratory, where Vincent himself had lived, and took orders.

The work of Vincent's mission-priests was remarkably varied. Their labours were at first entirely confined to country districts, and they were forbidden to preach in towns or to interfere with the parochial clergy. There was in this society a strong secular element, due to the common sense of the founder. The *procureur* was always a layman, and the community only took vows for a stated term of years. The retreats held at the college became famous, and among the young men who profited by them was the great Bossuet. Royal confirmation was bestowed on the society in 1627, but it was not until France entered upon her agony during the wars that all eyes were turned towards this band

of men. In a period of prosperity they had worked like other priests; but when the country fell on evil days, their mettle as well as their practical ability first became apparent to the nation as a whole.

The rumours of plague and famine which penetrated to Paris in the early days of the war cut Vincent to the heart. "I am," said he, "weighed down with grief by the constant remembrance of those who know not what to do, nor where to go; who suffer already and have yet to suffer more." His meditations resulted in prompt action. He went to the King, the Queen, to all in power, and put before them the state of France with a rough eloquence that moved them for the moment. When the King left the capital and continued the war by refusing to return to it, Vincent even went to Mazarin to beg him to induce Louis to reconsider his decision. Little was done to moderate the excesses of the armies in answer to these appeals, but money was subscribed by even the most frivolous with astonishing readiness. Priests of the mission and sisters (of whom more will be said) were sent to the seat of war to carry thither money and provisions, and to turn their hand to every kind of humane labour. That even the most abandoned respected their intention is evident from the fact that they were hardly ever molested on the journey. Frère Mathieu Renard travelled fifty-three times between Paris and Lorraine in the course of ten years, carrying enormous sums of money, and not once was he attacked on the way. A passport was really superfluous in their case, although it pleased great persons to give them one, as a sign of esteem and an extra precaution. Thus on 14th February 1651, the King graciously permitted them to help any one in any way they deemed desirable, and forbade all persons to take anything from them by force. The magistrates were ordered to punish with death all who disobeyed this order, and no armies were permitted to be quartered in villages against the wish of the mission-priests.

The money to be distributed was mostly collected in

Paris. In Lorraine alone, Vincent gave away 1,600,000 livres in kind. During 1640, five towns received 500 livres a week. A little later four others were added to the number. In ten years' time the sum thus distributed amounted to 72,000 livres. The following year it rose to 180,000 livres, besides that spent on gifts of clothing, bedding, and Church ornaments. The seed-corn sent at the same time was worth 40,000 livres.

After 1653, however, most of the funds were retained in the capital, because alms were on the decrease, owing to the poverty of the formerly rich and the growing needs of the refugees who had there congregated. The sum collected between Easter 1651 and 1652 was 13,342 livres, 6 sous. The following year a decrease of about 3000 livres was observed, and in 1654 it was found that the collections only amounted to 8156 livres, 1 sou. Money being now scarce, old clothes and furniture were collected in carts and distributed in poor districts. At the end of the war it was reckoned that 12,000,000 livres had been given in charity.

It is characteristic of Saint-Vincent that, living in a bigoted age when heretics were officially regarded as without the pale of the Church's ministrations, he should have commanded his workers to make no difference between them and their Catholic brethren.\* That the King was of a different mind, especially after the ascendancy of Madame de Maintenon, is evident from his directions to doctors issued in 1712. He thereby forbids them to give any succour to Protestants who refuse to make their confession on the third day of their illness.

But the missionaries' daily tramps along the heavy roads with mules laden with bedding, seed, and gold, were, perhaps, among the least arduous of their labours. The plague raged along their way, and they came almost daily to villages tenanted by men dying uncared-for in the terror of loneliness. These they nursed, comforted, buried. Sixteen of Vincent's priests were in Lorraine from 1636 to 1645, and others,

\* See Letter, 26 April 1651, to M. Coglée at Sedan.



together with some sisters, worked in Picardy and Champagne.

Among the many accounts of the state of things found by Saint-Vincent's workers, the following is typical. It is from that part of the *Relations* of 1651, which refers to Saint-Quentin. "Of the 450 sick persons whom the inhabitants were unable to relieve, 200 were turned out, and these we saw die one by one as they lay on the roadside. A large number still remain, and to each of them it is only possible to dole out the least scrap of bread. We only give bread to those who would otherwise die. The staple dish here consists of mice, which the inhabitants hunt, so desperate are they from hunger. They devour roots which the animals cannot eat; one can, in fact, not put into words the things one sees . . . This narrative, far from exaggerating, rather understates the horror of the case, for it does not record the hundredth part of the misery in this district. Those who have not witnessed it with their own eyes cannot imagine how great it is. Not a day passes but at least 200 people die of famine in the two provinces. We certify to having ourselves seen herds, not of cattle, but of men and women, wandering about the fields between Rheims and Rhétel, turning up the earth like pigs to find a few roots; and as they can only find rotten ones, and not half enough of them, they become so weak that they have not strength left to seek food. The parish priest at Boult, whose letter we enclose, tells us he has buried three of his parishioners who died of hunger. The rest subsisted on chopped straw mixed with earth, of which they composed a food which cannot be called bread. Other persons in the same place lived on the bodies of animals which had died of disease, and which the curé, otherwise unable to help his people, allowed them to roast at the presbytery fire."

Besides figuring as nurse, cook, carpenter, grave-digger, comforter "of unsuccess," the mission-priest was called upon to take charge of the orphaned or lost children he found crying in the deserted fields. He searched in the forests and disused quarries for the girls who had fled thither from the



soldiers, and who were afraid to venture into the open in search of food. He conveyed all homeless people to some permanent abiding-place and he put them in the way of earning their daily bread. One Lehault, who in 1650 had the happy idea of beginning a diary, records therein his admiration for the mission-priest working at Marle, then greatly afflicted by the wars. "His work," says Lehault, "resulted in an advantage and profit to the town which words are inadequate to express, and which can never be sufficiently praised. He was particularly indefatigable in making his rounds in the desolate fields in search of wanderers, and never failed to apprentice the young people he thus lighted upon, or to have them trained to regular habits and work in some community."

It will be seen from these accounts that to undertake this form of charity was equivalent to signing one's own death-warrant. Many of those who went down into the country never returned. It was to the infection spread by unburied bodies that the greatest mortality was due. One mission-priest records that he came upon 1500 such bodies near Saint-Souplet after the battle of 1651, and that he was obliged to hire men to bury them. This cost the mission 200 livres.

At Étampes, where the plague was particularly virulent, four hospitals and an orphanage were founded by the mission. About 1651, five priests and five sisters died there, and others were at once ready to take their place. Concerning one of these, Saint-Vincent writes: "God has called unto Himself M. David, of our Society. It was only a fortnight ago that he went down to Étampes to help the sick. M. Deschamps, with whom he worked, tells me that a man straight from Heaven could not have laboured more in hearing confessions, teaching the children their Catechism, nursing and feeding the sick, and burying bodies more or less returned to corruption. He went to Strechy to bury twelve which were infecting the village, and after that he fell ill and died." David was succeeded by a priest named

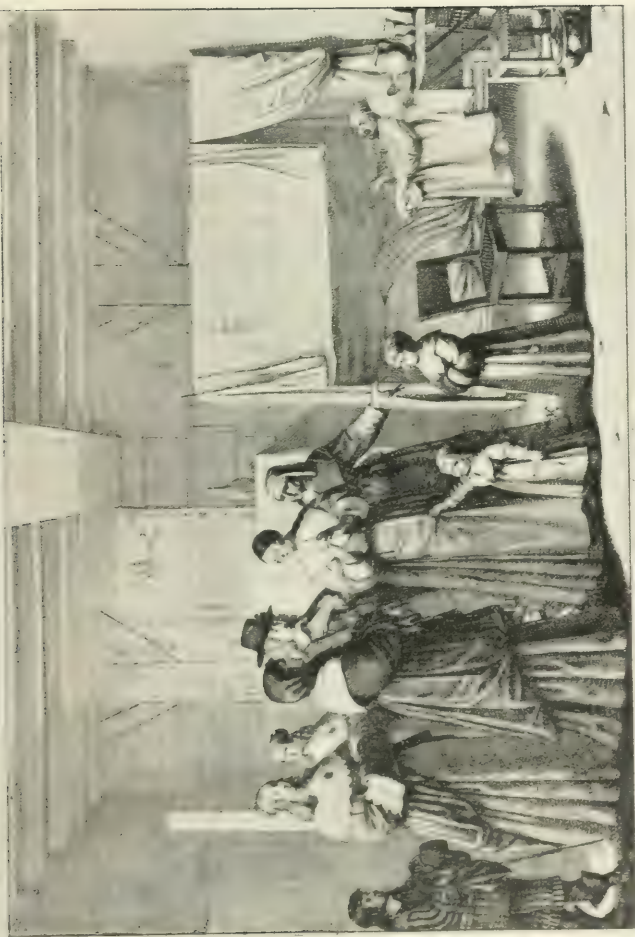
Delafosse, whose labours were also very soon cut short. "M. Delafosse, who was helping the poor at Étampes, has just been brought back on a stretcher suffering from fever. Others have gone to take his place, as he had taken that of the late M. David, who died at the same town and at the same godly work. Not a day passes without our feeling the loss of so good a workman."

But famous as is this strenuous society, the founder's name is best remembered in connection with another company of workers among the poor, for the flapping caps of the Sisters of Saint-Vincent are still a familiar sight in the slums of our large towns.

The history of their foundation is an interesting one. That genial prelate, Saint-François de Sales, had suggested to the fine ladies who consulted him that it would be an excellent thing if they would visit the hospitals and even do a little nursing there. This would edify the common herd and enable the ladies themselves to perform one of the corporal works of mercy recommended by the Apostle. The suggestion was not a novel one ; yet during the sixteenth century few women of position had been able to face physical contact with persons who were probably dirty and certainly diseased. Work thus done had suffered from lack of organisation, and, had any particular routine prevailed at the hospitals, such desultory attention would have interfered with it. Vincent therefore conceived the idea of banding together these ladies in a society under his presidency, having rules and recognised agenda. Their principal obligation was to visit the wards in the Hôtel-Dieu *regularly*, to bring necessary provisions of food, clothing and medical appliances, and to give a report of such work at a general meeting at which Vincent himself was always present. In addition to this personal service the *Dames de la Charité* collected money to send to destitute provinces. At one period they gave about 15,000 livres a month to Lorraine and Picardy alone. Among the original members of this society were Mesdames de Bailleul and de Pollalion. These were soon joined by persons bearing even more famous

names: Madame Fouquet, the wife of the minister, Marie de Gonzague, the Marquise de Maignelais mentioned above, the Présidente de La Moignon, and others. But as many of these ladies were genuinely prevented by their other duties or their health from personally undertaking such fatiguing work, a scheme was set on foot whereby capable and pious girls were employed as deputies to do the actual nursing and tend destitute children. Madame de Marillac was one of the first to start this scheme on working lines. But it is to Mademoiselle Le Gras, her husband's niece, that the foundation of the Sisterhood, as now known, is really due. This lady used to go from village to village on the Gondi estates, teaching the girls to nurse, giving them medicines and bandages, and begging them to live up to their high vocation. She also taught the little girls their Catechism. This campaign was afterwards extended to include the capital, and in 1633 girls were set apart to tend the poor, first in their own homes, then in the hospitals. A regular community was founded in 1646. The Archbishop's approval was formally given in 1655. Letters-patent were accorded in 1657, and houses were soon founded in various parts of France. The women thus enrolled were known as *Les Filles de la Charité*. Saint-Vincent wished it to be understood from the first that they were secular persons banded together for active work rather than for contemplation. Work was to be their best prayer. Their vows were therefore only taken yearly (as was the case with the mission-priests), and on the expiry of that term every sister was at liberty to return to the world without let or hindrance. The common-sense which characterises the constitutions of this Society is admirably exemplified in these famous words spoken by the founder: "Let their only chapel be their parish church, their cloister the public streets or the wards of the hospital, their sole close holy obedience, their grating the fear of God, and their veil a godly modesty." The friendliness with which these sisters are fain to greet all comers is not only natural, it is also obligatory: for Saint-Vincent enjoined upon them to

VISITING THE SICK  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY A. BOSSE







"fly all coldness," and to treat the sick "with compassion and cordiality." They were to proclaim the eternal verities by their willingness to wash floors and cheerfully endure the complaints of captious patients; to serve God by amusing the despondent as much as by chanting the penitential psalms.

At first the ranks of the Society under Mademoiselle Le Gras were recruited from the lower middle-classes; but soon girls of good birth sought to be admitted, and the order became, as it now remains, representative of every class of society. The first women of position to join it were Anne de Gennes and Jeanne Dallemagne. The revolution in hospital methods effected by the *Dames* and the *Filles de la Charité* was both wholesome and uncompromising. To begin with, they placed funds at the disposal of the authorities who had before been unable to provide the merest necessities for use in the wards. Besonge records among the revenues of the Hôtel-Dieu "50,000 écus, given by the same ladies who so much exerted themselves to relieve the needs of Picardy and Champagne."

A stop was also put to many bad practices. The most insane of these was, perhaps, one which consisted in augmenting the income of the hospitals by selling the clothes of dead patients to the poor of the city. In 1640 it was noted that 500 livres' worth of clothing were sold every year at the Hôtel-Dieu. No better method of propagating disease could possibly have been devised. Allusion has already been made to the habit of placing several persons in the same bed; and indeed at the Rouen hospital, inappropriately named Hôpital de la Santé, an eye-witness declared that "there were eight or ten people in one bed, and often one living person in the midst of seven or eight dead ones." \* Those whom the building could not contain, and who were placed in the yard, naturally died at once. When the yard, too, was crowded, "they had to use the cart-shed, in which were put eighty children, whose piteous crying could be heard all over the neighbourhood.

\* See *Registres Secrets*. Mem. Omar Talon.

It was the work of Saint Vincent to introduce cleanly habits and more wholesome and regular methods into these horrible dens of misery. He raised the most honourable profession of nursing from a despised position to that to which it is entitled. He routed the Mrs Gamps of the age and replaced them by women who worked from love, and not because they could find no more congenial way of earning their living. All this he achieved, very slowly it is true, and not all during his own lifetime. But hospital reform dates from his day, and the respect in which the nurse is to-day held is due to ideas first promulgated by him.

Many new hospitals were founded during this period: that of Poitiers in 1657; that of Soissons in 1660. A house for forty old people was founded by Vincent with money given by an anonymous donor. Further, in 1656 the King gave him La Salpêtrière and the house known as La Pitié at Bicêtre, so that Vincent was able to amalgamate these beggars' refuges into the Hôpital-Général, where all the destitute of the capital were from thenceforward housed.

Prison reform also has its roots in the soil tilled by Saint Vincent. M. de Gondi was, as has been already stated, master of the convict stations in France, but he had little personal knowledge of their condition. His wife, in the course of her visits to the prisoners in the *Concièrgerie*, who were being drafted from one galley station to another, discovered how shocking was the state of the convicts at these settlements. The men were chained for incredibly long hours at their posts. They were fed on bad and wholly insufficient food, senselessly flogged, quite without redress, and without friends to regard them as human beings. It was only natural that they should become brutal and desperate, and hardened into a state of resentful antagonism to God and man. Vincent knew what it was to be one of these poor men, having himself suffered even worse things as a slave in Africa. He therefore encouraged his friends to visit the convicts and to show them some small kindness and sympathy. He himself went from time to time and lived

with them as one friend with another. Finally, by dint of indefatigable petitioning and pleading, he effected some bettering of their state, as well as his own appointment as Almoner-General of the convicts of France. This gave him official right to visit them and report on necessary reforms, besides a stipend of 600 livres a year, which he spent on other people. At the first opportunity he had the convicts transported from the mediæval dungeons of the *Concièrgerie* to a house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. In 1622 he visited the station at Marseilles, and the next year we hear of him living with the prisoners at Bordeaux.

A few words must be said of the work he did for girls and little children. Many persons, such as Madame de Maignelais, received orphans into their houses. In 1622, Antoine Séguier, Président du Parlement, established a *Hospice de Notre-Dame de la Miséricorde* in the old palace of the Dukes of Guise in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel. Here he maintained a hundred orphan girls. The children were received at the age of five, taught a profession, and kept there until they were able to fend for themselves. M. Hamel, the Jansenist curé of Saint-Merry, instituted a refuge for girls fled from the country. A home for would-be suicides was started by Madame de Miramion, and, most excellent perhaps of all, a home was founded for poor girls of good family, who there enjoyed the society to which they were born, and spent their time in making clothes to give away. This last institution was originated by Madame de Maignelais, as was also the Society of the "Madelonnettes," founded in 1620.

Probably the first remembrance evoked by the name of Saint Vincent is that of his compassion for the sufferings of little children. Of all hard fates in that cruel age that of waifs and strays was perhaps the hardest. There was, it is true, a Foundling Hospital in Paris, but it had no revenues, and was often forgotten in favour of other institutions. Its internal management presented a spectacle of bestial indifference and neglect unparalleled in history. The many babies nightly picked up in the Parisian gutters were placed



in charge of a woman and two girls, who were as unable as they were unwilling to look after so large a family. To silence their crying it was usual to give the children laudanum. Many died of inanition, since it was to the interests of their guardian to reduce their number, both because her work was thereby lightened, and also because the few shreds of clothes found on them became her lawful prey. She was even sometimes able to acquire hard cash by selling infants for one franc to persons professing sorcery and requiring ingredients for their hell-broth. The story of Vincent's first introduction to the babies of Paris city is related as follows by various biographers. Whether it be true or not in detail is a matter of no importance whatever, for the substance of it—namely that he had pity on them and helped them—is proved by his subsequent action. Tradition has it that Saint Vincent was walking down an alley late one night in the year 1638. He there came upon a beggar who was breaking a child's limbs in order thereby to draw coppers from the compassionate next day. "Wretch," cried the saint, "what a mistake you have caused me to make! At a distance I actually took you for a man." He took the child into his arms, called upon the fast-collecting crowd to witness the outrage, and walked home followed by the enraged beggar, who claimed to be able to do as he liked with property which he had bought with his own money at the Foundling Hospital. On hearing this, Saint Vincent, having put the child into safety, turned his steps in that direction, still followed by the crowd. He there found children in the state described above. His next act was to call a meeting of the Ladies of Charity in order to put the case before them. It was impossible to provide for all the new-born children exposed in the streets, as their number amounted to 3000 or 4000 yearly. Twelve were, however, at once taken at random and put under the charge of Mademoiselle Le Gras above mentioned.

Sufficient money was soon subscribed at Court to maintain all the babies found in and near Paris. The house taken

for them at Bicêtre was soon given up on account of the keen air, which proved too strong for very young infants, and two houses, one opposite Saint-Lazare and the other in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, were hired and stocked with nurses and babies. So great became the fame of Saint Vincent's Sisters of Charity as nurses, that Jean-Jacques Olier, Curé of Saint-Sulpice, borrowed several of them to look after the fifty orphans he was bringing up in his parish. Vincent's Orphanage grew and thrived, and until the day of his death it was his chief pleasure to go and see these children of his old age.

It will be seen from the above fragmentary account of philanthropic effort in the seventeenth century that if the age was a wicked one, its general character is redeemed by indications of irradicable goodness lying low beneath the hardened soil. Wars may rage and selfish greed abound: but Love remains, and her years can never fail.

## CHAPTER VII

### INTERCOURSE BETWEEN TOWN AND COUNTRY

FRENCH society under the great King was probably quite unaware that it was being subjected to a process of centralisation; but that it felt the effects of that process is one of the most certain facts in the history of national psychology. The moral noble of seventeenth-century fiction might certainly give himself up to the contemplation of domestic virtue in the midst of his ancestral turnips; but the swagger with which he proclaimed his indifference to society shows that it cost him some effort to do so. The truth is, that every normal person in that social age could hardly maintain existence without a constant intercourse with his equals and superiors. Plain folk in the country looked upon the country-town as the earthly paradise. Those with a pedigree to lend them countenance considered Paris to be the only background befitting the display of their rank and titles. The Parisians themselves crowded round the Court. The Court crowded round the King. Thence national curiosity, having surged to a point beyond which it could not rise, spread outwards in ever-encroaching waves. To know where the King dined yesterday, and whether the Dauphin had lost his cold, was the duty of every patriot. But it was his pleasure to learn less personal news besides; to wit: who had been thrown into the Bastille, and why? How the army was faring on the frontier; what was the true position of the French Church in the eyes of the Pope, etc. People crowded into the public gardens in the evening to discuss these matters, and the newsmonger enjoyed a most flattering popularity. Towards the end of the century his profession became a recognised one with a fixed market value. The *nouvelliste* made it his

business to collect from friends at Court, friends at the front, and even agents abroad, the very latest news obtainable. He knew all about the money market and much about the ministerial programme at home. It was his pride to announce nothing without sufficient guarantee of its truth, and it is remarkable how accurate was the information acquired by the more famous *nouvellistes*, such as M. de Lyonne, son of the Secretary of State.

The chief scene of his activities was the garden of the *Palais-Royal* or of the Luxembourg. At about 6 P.M. the *nouvelliste* mounted a chair, collected a crowd, and harangued it in fiery terms concerning the conduct of the allies or the state of the Spanish frontier. Announcements of victories were thus sprung upon the people, and possible political courses were suggested and discussed, even before the ministers themselves had been able to give them a thought. The Pont-Neuf and the Tuileries gardens were a happy hunting-ground for the seeker after news. The garden was an especially select meeting-place, for *laquais* were not allowed in it. Men walking there were obliged to wear swords and women ceremonial head-dresses. Nurses were forbidden to enter except with the permission of the State.

Every Frenchman was thus provided with an opportunity of learning how the world went ; for to read the newspapers at home was "poor work." Papers were few in number and inadequate in character. The *Gazette*, founded by Theophraste Renaudot in 1631, was the first real French newspaper. In connection with it was a *bureau*, where advertisements might be registered and the news discussed under cover. Debates on other questions also appear to have taken place at this and similar clubs. For instance : "The first of the two points to be here discussed during the first hour of Monday's meeting at two o'clock is 'the nature of causes.' During the second hour, enquiry will be made why every one desires others to follow his advice, even if he have no interest in the result. The third hour will be spent as usual in reporting or examining the secrets, curiosities and



inventions of arts and lawful sciences." (That is to say, that persons hoping to hear a discussion on magic would be disappointed.)

At a later date Renaudot's paper was metamorphosed into the *Gazette de France*, and passed entirely under Richelieu's control and censorship. It now contained laconic accounts of those occurrences which the Cardinal deemed it advisable the Parisians should know. Louis XIII. is said to have himself contributed to its pages. No blue-book could have been more dull. Two other papers belonging to a later decade, *Le Mercure Galant* (1672) and *La Muse Historique*, were more entertaining because less pompous. But even they failed to give much news that was really interesting. Loret, the publisher of the latter organ, elected to dispense his information in a versified form. The following is his method of describing the funeral oration preached at the death of Condé's mother.

" De Vabres, orateur célèbre  
Fit lundi l'oraison funèbre  
De celle qu'on nommoit icy  
Charlotte de Montmorency  
De Condé princesse donairière . . .  
L'oraison se fit le matin  
Au grand couvent Saint-Augustin.  
C'était un beau panégyrique  
Et d'un accent si pathétique,  
Cet évêque le proféra  
Que l'assemblée en soupira  
Et plusieurs émus par ses charmes,  
En versèrent même des larmes."

Advertisements of a miscellaneous nature occupied a large space in the paper. Here are a few taken at random: "Wanted, a travelling companion for a journey to Italy in a fortnight." "For sale, a young dromedary at a reasonable price." "For sale, an unfinished coat of scarlet cloth, lined with scarlet satin and trimmed with silver braid — price 18 écus." "A person is willing to communicate a method

of preventing game from going out of a wood, and of going back again when it is once out by any opening except that desired by the owner."

In the country it was very difficult to obtain reliable news even during time of peace. To begin with, the postal system was uncertain. Secondly, the privacy of letters was entirely disregarded. The Government did not hesitate to order the breaking open of letters passing through the post, in the hope of detecting treason. The King himself looked upon the reading of his subjects' correspondence as an amusing pastime. A red-hot wire was passed under the seal of the letters, and if the contents proved interesting, the packet was put aside for the perusal of the authorities. A third difficulty in correspondence was one occasioned by the epistolary habits of the writers themselves. Correspondence as well as personal intercourse was hedged about with ceremony, and few persons had the courage of Madame de Sévigné in breaking loose from formalities. Never was an age more favourable for excellent letter-writing on the part of original persons. Never, on the other hand, was the etiquette of correspondence more hampering to those who had not the spirit to discard it. Interminable compliments and fine phalanxes of Latin quotations form the main body of many seventeenth-century letters. The news is entirely lost among the flowers of rhetoric. The admirable Courtin gives several rules to be observed by a correspondent. The paper should be large, but even if it is small it must be folded. The higher the rank of the person addressed, the larger the space to be left between the vocative "Monseigneur" at the left-hand top corner and the body of the letter. Should an allusion to the writer or any equally inferior person occur in the letter, the word "monsieur," if it allude to the person addressed, must not be used in juxtaposition with it—*i.e.*: "C'est de moi, monsieur . . . c'est de mon père, monsieur, que je veux parler" would be a most reprehensible phrase. (This absurd rule is probably a reflection of the belief that an inferior must not approach very

near to a person to whom he owed respect.) A similar space must be left between the end of the letter and the signature. The date and address should come last—to place them at the beginning would clearly imply arrogance. The ink, too, was often a source of great annoyance to both writer and recipient. Madame de Grignan's ink, bought, no doubt, in Provence, was so pale that it was impossible to read her letters. It was, in fact, "just the ink with which to register promises one does not wish to keep." A few months later Madame de Grignan had managed to acquire some of the blackest ink in Paris. "I need fear nothing now except blots, which are almost unavoidable with ink of this consistency."

The other great means of intercourse, namely travelling, was not a thing to be undertaken lightly. Of the danger of attack by brigands, something will be said later. But in addition to possible robbery and murder, the traveller looked forward to certain discomfort and fatigue. John Evelyn mentions that there were wolves in Normandy when he passed through it, and other writers allude with bitterness to the dirty inns, the poor fare, and the bad conditions of the roads all over France. Mademoiselle relates that the dying Louis XIII., looking out of a window at Saint-Germain, pointed out a bad place in the road, and requested that it might be avoided when his body was taken to be buried at Saint-Denis.

Seventeenth-century travelling was, nevertheless, a great improvement on travelling in the previous century. Public carriages already ran from Rouen and Orleans to the capital. In 1594 coaches and relays of horses were organised for other districts, and the tariff of charges fixed by royal authority. The average speed at which a coach travelled was 25 lieues\* a day. The fare from Paris to Lyons in 1709 was 93 livres, 14 sous, and the transit occupied about five days. The journey often began before daybreak. The travellers, their feet embedded in a

\* Lieue = about three English miles.

litter of straw, sat tightly packed in the stuffy vehicle until long after nightfall. "We travelled," writes Madame de Sévigné, "from dawn till late into the night, with barely two hours' halt for dinner. It poured with rain all day long, and as the roads were quite fiendish (*endiablées*), we were often obliged to go on foot for fear of being upset by the fearful ruts."

The passengers carried with them a certain quantity of food, and often little stoves at which to warm their hands. Dinner, as understood by country landlords, was of a primitive description, though on the main roads a fairly ambitious *menu* was often attempted. In 1672 a solid meal, consisting of meat, bread, and wine, cost 20 sous. On fast-days vegetables were provided. Care for the spiritual needs of travellers went further than this, for on the *Canal du Midi* at any rate, a priest was always ready on the landing-stage to say Mass on days of obligation for passengers arriving by the boats.

But great as was the discomfort of seventeenth-century travelling, the entertainment afforded by it was correspondingly great. Curious as well as fearful sights met the eye of the traveller peering from the coach window. Persons who passed Cambray at the time of the King's visit in 1604 there beheld a finger-post, with a gold fringed glove drawn over it, directing them towards the town. Further on they might see the body of a criminal hanging from a tree, with beard well trimmed and hair arranged, in order that it might do credit to the loyal city. During bad seasons, beggars followed the coaches clamouring for food which was distributed among them from the windows. Such episodes furnished subjects of conversation during the long hours of confinement. The study of one's fellow-traveller also served then as now to occupy the enquiring mind. The following letter by Mademoiselle de Scudéry gives one a very just idea of the sentiments of an educated traveller then on tour through France.

". . . But now, to inform you as to who made up this



party [in the coach], you must know that we had with us a young mercenary, disguised as a soldier to conceal his real calling. His scarlet cloak and gold buttons, stout boots and big legs scarcely bore out the expression of his face. In a word, though hung about with the light cavalry regulation appendages, he closely resembled a solicitor on a trial. Next to him was a musician of low order who, to avoid starving in Paris, was setting out for his native village in the hope of obtaining money there; and though many friends had contributed to his dress, he was none the neater for it. The hat he was wearing half covered his face, owing to the smallness of his head. Round his neck was a thing more like a barber's bib than anything else. His doublet had long skirts, and his breeches approached very nearly to the Swiss fashion. In a word, more than one century and nation had left their mark on his extraordinary attire. The third person was a Rouen burgher's wife, who had lost a lawsuit at Paris, and was complaining impartially of the injustice of the tribunal and of the mire in the streets. The fourth was a grocer's wife of the Rue Saint-Antoine, who had more than twelve rings on her fingers, and was going, as she said, to have a look at the sea and the country. The fifth, who was a tallow-chandler and the aunt of the aforesaid, had been urged by curiosity to accompany her niece, in order to view the citadel of Havre. No. six was a young student returning from Bourges to take his second degree, and already preparing the pleading of his first cause. The seventh person was a citizen, afraid of everything and everybody. He took all he looked on for a gang of robbers, and if he only caught a glimpse in the distance of a flock of sheep and their shepherds, he made early preparation for giving up his purse. The eighth person was a wit from Lower Normandy, who pointed more jokes than ever did M. l'Abbé de Franguelot when it was the fashion to do so, and who, by jesting at the company, made himself a fitter subject for mockery than any one of them. . . . No doubt you are persuaded that the conversation of so fair an

assembly must be amusing. The musician, though his voice was more of a nuisance than the noise of the coach wheels, never desisted from singing; the citizen's wife, who had lost the lawsuit, uttered a constant stream of imprecations against her referendary; the grocer's wife, being anxious to see the view, slept as long as the daylight lasted; the chandler lady was never tired of gloating over the pleasure she should have in seeing the stores of the citadel, the prodigious quantity of wick-yarn, etc., which she conceived ought to be found there: also the great number of muskets requiring this wick-yarn which she had heard say were to be seen at Havre. Sometimes she wished all these things were in her shop, sometimes that she was the person to sell them to the garrison. To sum up, it may be said that we got out of that coach with military honours: 'Drums beating'—*i.e.*, the voice of the musician; 'cannon-firing'—*i.e.*, our chandler's wife's wick-yarn. As long as we drove in the darkness, she always had a candle in her hand to light up the coach. As to the young student, he only talked of statute-law, customs, and Cujas. First of all, I thought the youth had rung changes on the name, and that when he said *Cujas* he meant *Cusac*, though what he said did not fit in with this latter personage. But at last I found out that Cujas was a certain doctor of civil law—a J. C. learned in all things.\* If war was talked of, the student said that *he* would rather be a follower of Cujas than a soldier. If we spoke of travels, he assured us that Cujas was known everywhere. If music was the theme, he said that Cujas was more accurate in his conclusions than music in its harmonies. If one spoke of eating, he swore that he would prefer to fast rather than not read Cujas. Did we speak of fair women, he said that Cujas had a lovely daughter. . . . In a word, Cujas was in everything, and he bored me so much that this will be the last as well as the first time in my life that I will write or pronounce his name. As for the talk of the constitutional

\* Born in 1520, died in 1590.

trembler, you can easily imagine that he was as boastful as a Gascon. . . .”

Mademoiselle de Scudéry mocks at the timid man who beheld brigands in a flock of sheep, but there is much to be said to excuse him. Brigands there certainly were in certain districts, especially in Brittany, and they did not hesitate to rob or even murder the obstreperous traveller. Often they were merry fellows, who would jest with their victims and stand them a drink. The number of professional thieves at the beginning of the century was due to the disintegration of society after the wars of religion. A treaty of Peace threw many persons out of employment, inasmuch as he who had handled a musket was usually loath to return to a pitchfork.

There was in brigandage as in all other professions during that wonderful period, a haughty and well-defined aristocracy, a comfortable middle class, and a mob of humble workmen in the trade. Co-operation was perceived to produce the most satisfactory results from a business point of view. There are several instances of gangs of cut-throats recruited chiefly among disbanded soldiers and discarded valets of great men. At the head of such an association was often a committee of gentlemen of family, who preferred a free if short life to upholding the honour of their House at home. One among these was the president, and entitled to exact implicit obedience and to lead the band whither he would. The most famous of these robbers was a member of an ancient Breton family, who had served under the Duc de Mercœur during the wars of the League. In spite of his profession, he had a singular sense of the dignity of his House, and a corresponding reluctance to drag his name in the mud of infamy. He therefore took the name of the legendary hunter Guilleri, and by it he is known to posterity. His personal prejudices are well exemplified in the motto which he was wont to affix in public places along the roads: “La paix aux gentilshommes, la mort aux prévôts et aux archers, la bourse aux marchands.”



Guilleri was a captain under whom any robber of position might well deem it an honour to serve, and the forty thieves who were his original companions were greatly envied men. The numbers soon rose, and according to some accounts he ended by having 400 men under him. At the head of this little army he was able to defy the law, to seize villages, and to extort ransoms from the villagers; to take possession of castles, after having ejected the owners, and to fortify them as strongholds for his own residence. Here he entertained his friends, and often also his victims, if they were of good family and worthy to break bread with him. One such visitor was a gentleman who was captured, blindfolded, and taken to a fortress in the forest near Essarts. The captain received him courteously, took him on a tour of inspection round the ammunition and provision room, showed him the mills and the drawbridge, and finally a great hall hung with Spanish leather stolen from a ship. Then Guilleri, holding a pistol to his visitor's head, extracted a promise from him never to be party to any expedition against the band. Dinner was served on silver plate and the meal enlivened with agreeable conversation. The guest was then politely blindfolded again and conveyed to the spot where he had been captured.

A characteristic story of Guilleri is that of his meeting with a peasant on the road to Nantes. Guilleri was basking face downwards in the sun by the roadside as a peasant passed by. "Whither away?" cried Guilleri. "To Nantes," replied the peasant. "Why, that is the place I'm going to!" continued Guilleri. "I am on my way to attend a lawsuit there," said the peasant. "You have money then?" enquired the thief. "No—only seven or eight sous for dinner," replied the cautious rustic. "I have no money either," admitted Guilleri, "but I hope God will send us some. Let us pray." With that he pulled out a manual of prayers and knelt down with his victim. Having pattered off a few petitions he bade the peasant feel in his pockets to see whether any money had appeared. Nothing being found, the peasant was reproved for not praying with sufficient heartiness, and the prayers



were resumed. Guilleri then felt in his own pocket and produced five sous. After a few more petitions he brought out ten, then fifteen. The peasant still declared he could find nothing. Guilleri condoled with him, assuring him that if he only prayed earnestly he would receive quite a large sum, for "I who do it but carelessly have been answered; how much more then should you be answered? . . . Let *me* feel in your pockets." The search revealed 400 écus, of which Guilleri appropriated half, saying at the same time to the peasant: "Ah, wretch, you tried to cheat me and to withhold from me a part of the gifts Heaven sends you in my presence, as if I ought to have no share in them."

Guilleri was captured with sixty-two companions by the Governor of Niort at the head of a large contingent of soldiers. The captain was executed at La Rochelle in 1608. He accepted his fate with stoicism, because he deemed it vain to struggle against "the influence of the stars." It is characteristic that the only regret he expressed on the scaffold for his manner of life was that people might "lay the blame of it" on the House from which he had sprung.

Captain Carrefour, the other great marauder of the time, was a Burgundian butcher's son. Guilleri had ever held his head high and robbed people in a frank and straightforward manner. Carrefour preferred disguise to ostentation, and Paris alleys to the open high-roads. One of his favourite pastimes was to dress as a hermit and complain of himself in his thieving capacity to the passers-by. He, too, was captured, and executed at Dijon in 1622. Carrefour's was the last really great name on the roll of seventeenth-century brigands. After his day the entire profession of robbing underwent a change. The police became more efficient, and during Louis XIII.'s reign the larger bands of marauders were finally extirpated. Independent highway-men were fairly common even in Louis XIV.'s reign, but all serious danger to the community at large had vanished. It was the fear associated with the memory of murderers, rather than present dread of their appearing, which possessed

the timid traveller. Towards the end of the century it was discomfort, rather than danger, that made the journey formidable. Still, men were willing to brave much for the sake of intercourse or in pursuit of money. And who shall say that they risked more than we, who have "put a girdle round about the earth?"

## CHAPTER VIII

### COUNTRY LIFE

WHILE the wealthy nobles were spending money fast and furiously in the wake of the King, the poorer gentry sat in their ruined castles disconsolately comparing their state with that of their immediate ancestors. The latter had been far better off than their seventeenth-century representatives, owing partly to economic reasons and partly to their simpler tastes. The early sixteenth-century noble, even when his pockets were well-lined, preferred playing the petty despot in his own farmyard to being lost in the crowd at Court. Further, he did not care to flaunt his name and pedigree before the eyes of tradespeople in towns, because there his pretensions were often ignominiously quelled by base-born representatives of the law. To be fined ten louis by a person whose father sold candles, was a risk which no noble in his senses would put himself in the way of incurring. All gentle-people, therefore, whose income was not as great as their pride, took the part of cultivating the paternal acres, providing themselves with homely food and dress, and keeping up a degree of ceremony which was as impressive in their village as it would have been inadequate in the house of kings. An occasional quarrel about a trespassing colt or the front place in church enlivened the monotony of existence. The ladies of the family, sufficiently fine in brocades inherited from their great-grandmothers, regaled the rare visitor with soup and sodden meat and bread of a very indifferent colour. But the quality of the food was forgotten in the warmth of the welcome offered. The noisy half-clad children were relegated to their natural sphere, the farmyard, and the host, returning from his rabbit-snaring expedition, received

his guests with sober dignity. A peasant wedding on the estate was often honoured by the presence of the lord, and farmers paced the furrows in fraternal converse with the sons of the house. There was something patriarchal in the relations of a good lord with the tenants on his manor, and until an unwholesome and insane craving for "society" began to drive the nobles courtwards, there was many a castle in the country where even the most fastidious of poets might have dwelt in "sweet content."

But by the end of the sixteenth century the evil genius of the country squire had begun to prime his simple soul with extravagant suggestions. The passage of a glittering cavalcade along his muddy cart-tracks had awakened the gentleman farmer to a consciousness of his clumsy leggings and shabby coat. Nor did his wife, flushed and cross from her pork-salting, compare favourably with the powdered ladies passing in their litters. Yet, upstairs in his chest, lay rolled a pedigree as long as that of any one at Court. His children might be covered with perennial slime from the duck-pond, their manners might be identical with those of the little peasants with whom they played, but the fact remained that they were "of a good house." No amount of dirt could obscure the brilliance of their birth. Small wonder then that the sight of other men's splendour should turn the heads of all but the most stoic. The farming of an estate was a thankless task, involving early rising, manual labour, and great self-denial. The profits were naturally in kind, and of ready money for amusement there was none. The temptation to leave one's land to the care of a steward, or even to sell it altogether, was a strong one. The small noble, thus his own man again, could then attach himself to some rich kinsman or neighbour and fare gloriously to Court in his retinue. Once there, he might make his fortune by captivating a rich heiress or by luck at cards. If really talented, he might afford to be honest and acquire wealth by following one of the few professions possible to a man of family. Even if he were unfortunate, there was always the money-lender,



not to speak of the chances of having his debts paid by the King. In any case, his daily needs would be supplied (and generously too, perchance) by the lord to whom he had, in the good old phrase, "given himself." This tendency was one which exactly suited the centralising policy of Richelieu and especially of Louis XIV., and every encouragement was therefore given to the intending emigrant to Court. Those who still clung to the land were roused by means of ministerial letters to the *Intendant* of their provinces, enquiring why they never came to pay their respects to their royal master. Purchasers willing to pay highly for estates were always to be found among the crowd of people whom lately-acquired wealth caused to thirst for social prestige. Indeed, towards the end of the century, the King's expedient of gaining money by selling titles of nobility let loose upon the country a vast army of estate hunters. The price paid for a title was 6000 livres, and in 1696 the sum thus gained by the treasury amounted to 3,066,000 livres. Others acquired nobility by buying the post of royal secretary, etc.

But besides this craving for change, the reform which had taken place in the organisation of the army gave encouragement to the nomadic spirit. It is true that agriculture had incidentally occupied the earlier nobles to a very large extent; but their first obligation had always been one of military service. During the tumults of the Religious Wars it had been their duty as well as their pastime to fight for one side or the other. Private warfare filled up the interstices between these more serious campaigns. But on the accession of Louis XIV. an advance was made in this respect. First of all, capital punishment was meted out to persons who indulged in private raids and personal quarrels ending in bloodshed. Secondly, the reforms of Louvois included a provision for the regular recruiting of soldiers. This meant that no one could join and leave the army at will. A man might no longer live in barracks in winter, and go home to superintend the reaping of his corn in summer. It was now to be determined whether the sword conferred more prestige than the ancestral plough-



MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ  
ROMAN PORTRAIT AT VERSAILLES



share, since an alternative use of these two implements was no longer possible. The bait of a military career under the auspices of the Court was offered as a test, and the general rush to seize it proved conclusively that it was the sword that prevailed. Migration from the country, gradual hitherto, now became steady and systematic. All who could by hook or by crook penetrate as far as Paris did so. Those who could not, resigned themselves to their fate, in the hope that by scraping together every penny, they might procure a better future for their children. Of this, however, there was seldom great prospect. Farming was their usual occupation, and most landowners considered themselves fortunate if there was no deficit in their accounts at the end of the year. To engage in any other profession would have been to lose caste. The laws of propriety permitted a man to sell his own vegetables, and the sight of a gentleman with his sword at his side and a basket of turnips on his arm, haggling at the local market, was not at all an unusual one. Glass-blowing was, strangely enough, a pursuit not derogatory to a noble. But every one could not have a glass hut, and few persons had the courage to throw convention to the winds and earn their living comfortably by trade. Most nobles were therefore constrained by their pride to aim at a display which was entirely above their means.

It is with this second large and rather pathetic class that we are about to deal.

The age for building fortified houses was now over, but those nobles who could not afford to have their old manors renovated and crowned with the steep roofs so dear to the seventeenth-century architect, were compelled to live among the crumbling ruins of the feudal age. The strong fingers of the ivy pushed themselves into the chinks of the masonry in emulation of the hand of time. Damp pervaded the gloomy passages, and the dust of centuries lay along the unused tower stairs. The chief approach to the dwelling-house often lay past the manure heap and all but through the duck-pond.



Dilapidated sheds flanked it on either side, and the door into the hall was liable to be barred by the presence of a ruminating cow. Inside the house the state of things was not much better. Hens invaded the living-room, and the clatter of wooden shoes rang perpetually along the flagged corridors. Everything was bare and penurious. Even rich men did not dine off china plates till well on into the eighteenth century. In the seventeenth, pewter was almost universally used. Silver plate was very rare, though in 1617 a Picardy noble is described as possessing three silver spoons. (The rest of his possessions appear to have consisted of one table, two chairs, a goblet, a salt-cellar and some pewter plates.)

The furniture of such a house mostly dated from the preceding century, and was little the worse for wear if of wood, but naturally tattered if upholstered with brocade. Broken glass and a few china bowls caught the astonished eye from the tops of cupboards. Gilt-leather hangings adorned the walls of the more opulent. Some nobles even possessed whole sets of tapestry. One Jean de Mesgrigny rose daily to the contemplation of the whole company of prophets looming life-sized on his wall. Others lived in the presence of hunting-pieces, depicting strange be-whiskered animals rampaging through adventurous landscapes. Some contented themselves with grim rows of pots blazing red and blue on a white ground. Almost all dispensed with carpets. Books were scarce, clocks almost unknown. What money there was chiefly melted away in the purchase of material for clothes. In the earlier part of the seventeenth century, matters were much simplified for the châtelaine by the possibility of dressing her husband and sons and covering her chairs with a coarse woollen material called *cadis*. But as soon as the fashions from Court began to filter through into the country, husbands and sons became refractory. Cheap cloth and even satin began to show themselves in the fields. In other matters also, men became ambitious. A large number of servants was considered indispensable to a man who wished to maintain his position in the province. The Duc de Nevers,

though hard pressed for money, had 146 servants, and every little lordling was content if he could point to a tattered crew of ruffians and call it "ma maison." Satires on persons of this type abound in seventeenth-century plays. The following passage is from Vanquelin de la Fresnaie's *Satires françoises*.

"Chacun vent estre noble et faire le seigneur  
Prendre les mœurs des rois et des princes l'honneur,  
Imiter leur marcher, saluer de la nuque  
Retrousser la moustache et hausser la perruque  
Et depuis que d'Espagne et d'Italie est venu  
Le flatteur baise-main au devant inconnu,  
Que les princes, les ducs ont pris ce mot d'Altesse  
L'ombre pour le soleil fut pris de la noblesse."

Perrault, Du Lorens and other writers regarded the country noble as the lawful victim of their cruel pens. In their very entertaining works we may behold the country gentleman, clumsy and eaten up with conceit, lording it in the choir of his church, playing with his gloves and simulating a well-bred indifference to everything whatsoever. We see him in his own house, kissing the ladies who visit his wife and entangling himself in endless compliments of the very worst taste. We learn how greatly he values ignorance, and how vulgar he thinks it to know anything. "To write and speak badly is what chiefly becomes them," is the terse conclusion of one who knew the race well. Such a lordling is described as not knowing his age until the churchwarden tells him that he was born in the year when the new dovecot on his estate was built. A châtelaine of the same type was—

"Chaste, prude, fort laide, au teint jaune et hâlé,  
Et tirant quelque peu sur le cochon brûlé ;  
Sa dure et sèche main, depuis son mariage  
N'a peu souffrir des gants le fâcheux esclavage ;  
Mais cette noble main, nourrice des dindons  
A versé mille fois le lait clair aux cochons."

The heir to the estate and title is thus described :—

“C’est un aimable enfant, il garnit bien sa panse  
Et toujours dans la main il tient quelque morceau  
De flan ou de pâté, de tarte ou de gâteau ;  
Il a sur son jupon cent taches bien écrites  
Et son petit minois crasseux de pommes cuites. . . .”

The fact that the little nobleman wears wooden shoes is thus accounted for :—

“Le sabot rend le pied et plus droit et plus ferme  
Entre nous, mille fois je me suis étonné  
Qu’à monsieur le Dauphin on n’en ait pas donné.  
Mais les enfants des rois sont nourris comme d’autres  
Ils sont plus négligés bien souvent que les nôtres. . . .”

The domestic life of such a family is admirably satirised in the comedy entitled *Le Cousinage*, the chief character of which is depicted in the act of paying a visit to a country cousin who has often been his guest in town. On his arrival in the usual farmyard he is surprised that no servant comes forward to take his horse. The first sign of life he observes is the hasty shutting of a window behind which some persons unknown are distinctly seen to be lurking. It then dawns upon the visitor that he is being mistaken for one of the hated race of royal officials. At this juncture a stable-boy takes it upon himself to emerge from a shed, make a general statement that every one is out, and then rush back into retirement. The guest, now thoroughly exasperated, curses his fate aloud, and expresses his views on such treatment of a cousin. At the word “cousin,” a girl who has been reconnoitring him from behind a cart makes a dash for the house exclaiming : “Open the door—my cousin is down there without a light.” The master of the house now comes forth, and explains that he is always afraid of enemies, and introduces the visitor into the living room :—

D’où la poussière sortoit ainsi que d’une halle,  
Car peu auparavant, pour mieux m’y recevoir,  
On l’avait balayée, ainsi qu’on pouvoit voir

Par un tas de poussière à la porte amassée  
Qu'un petit chambrillon surpris avait laissée."

Hereupon there follow the usual ridiculous formalities about precedence :—

"Je le prie à l'entrée ; il me prend par la main :  
' Je resterais icy plus tost jusqu 'à demain '  
Me dit-il sousriant des yeux et de la bouche,  
Que de manquer d'un point à l'honneur qui vous touche."  
Lors je baisse la teste et prends le pas devant,  
Et luy de m'embrasser ainsi qu'auparavant,  
Il met son chapeau bas, me présente une chaise,  
Tasche par tout moyens de me mettre à mon aise,  
Il appelle un valet propre à me débouter,  
Il court impatient pour le faire haster ;  
Puis me laissant tout seul, il va dans la cuisine,  
Il donne ordre au souper ; il mande ma cousine."

The latter is meanwhile dressing as rapidly as she can. The servants lose their heads at the unwonted excitement and do everything wrong. The table is laid by the stable-boy above mentioned, who enters with a glass and his hat in one hand, and a jug of water and a napkin in the other. Host and guest survey him in awkward silence. Happily a diversion is caused by the behaviour of the dinner for which they are waiting. The birds that are to form the *pièces de résistance* are still at large. "I hear," says the guest, "the cries of a fowl and a goose which have rushed into the house, being well aware that it is after them that the pursuit is being made. The hen then takes to her wings, and flying into the air smashes bottles and glasses, while we join in the hue and cry."

When the meal is at last ready, the hostess appears, flushed from cooking and as much bewildered as her servants. The smallness of their number is accounted for by the fact that the rest are "away." "The wine," says the host, "is expected to arrive to-morrow," so for to-day the noble guest must content himself with cider. The man who



is waiting spills everything, and the one who snuffs the candle is so clumsy that he puts it out each time. This candle, observes the guest, is dirty, and gives a light suggestive of a wizard's den; it is, moreover, stuck into a broken and morose-looking candlestick. The meal over, a bed is offered to the town cousin. It is covered with a rug, consisting of a network of holes held together by a few shreds of wool. The bedstead groans and creaks and the whole room is as dirty as possible.

The united effects of so many inconveniences determine the visitor to run away, and at daybreak he slinks out towards the stable to saddle his horse. The first person he meets is the master of the house, who presses him to stay and walk in the garden. But the guest pleads important business, and rides out into the green lanes, thanking fate for his escape.

This episode belongs to the domain of fiction. The following professes to belong to that of history. It is from the pen of Bussy-Rabutin, the cousin, friend and lover of Madame de Sévigné. He was travelling with the Comtesse de Bussy, when the adventure took place. "We arrived," says Bussy, "at one o'clock at night and during a snowstorm, at the house of one of the Countess's relations. Him we did not see, because he had quartan-fever and was, fortunately, beginning to have a shuddering-fit when we arrived. Our luck would have been perfect had his wife been suffering from fever as well, for we could not have been worse entertained than we were, and we should have felt more at liberty to do as we liked.

"We were received in a room on a lower level than the yard, and I am fully assured that the walls of the apartment are damp in the dog-days. Most of the tiles which had once paved it were lacking, so that one was compelled to steer a devious course across the floor. While the trees which were to serve us as fuel were being cut down, we were invited to sit down in enormous chairs, quite innocent of upholstery, in front of a fireplace in which there was no fire. We

languished in cold and dreary silence ; for after the common-places to which one gives utterance on one's arrival, we had not the faintest idea of what to say to that woman, nor she to us. She was not too stupid to be ashamed of the ridiculous reception she had afforded us, and we were being too badly entertained to be sorry for her. I was dying to go and warm myself at the kitchen fire, which I could hear crackling, for in spite of the warmth of my love, I was frozen in the presence of my mistress ; but it seemed to me rude to leave her and not to share cold as well as weariness with her. Beauvoir, who was as cold as I and who had no such scruples, went out to hasten the coming of our wood (so he said), and then planted himself in front of the kitchen fire to give his orders. A quarter of an hour later we saw two peasants carry in a cart-load of wood on their shoulders. They put the logs, which were covered with snow, on the fire-dogs, and a maid-of-all-work then arrived with a bundle of hay so damp that she was quite unable to light it. The smoke almost suffocated us. At last she was obliged to have recourse to the straw mattresses of the beds. The only result of all this, after our long waiting, was that the snow on the wood melted and made a kind of pond, which spread up to our feet and drove us back into the middle of the room. This was in truth so amusing that the Countess and I looked at each other and burst out laughing. At last they brought the supper, which was as bad as the fire. The soups consisted simply of hot water ; and of all the meat that was served, there was none that had not formed part of a living animal when we arrived. The bread was quite new and only half-baked. The wine was sour and clouded. The table-linen was not merely damp—it was positively wet, and the heat of the soups made the tablecloth smoke. The cloud therefrom resulting finally obscured the faint glimmer of the little candle, which was one of those of which twenty-four go to the lb. Another drawback connected with this meal was that the spoons, which really were of silver, had been reduced to the thinness of foil ; and as my luck is always deplorable, the spoon that

fell to my lot was half broken, so that in taking it out of my mouth it hooked itself into my upper lip and all but tore the same. . . ."

It was not often that the lord of such an establishment, when once wedded by necessity or choice to country life, visited Paris or the Court. When he did so, his astonishment at the extravagance of the courtiers was only equalled by their amusement at his eccentricities. Poisson's *Baron de la Crasse* (1662), depicts the noble of that name on an excursion to the metropolis, decked out, as he imagines, in most suitable costume. "But," he exclaims, "that cursed cravat cost me more than all the rest. I was set on having one made of Venice point. Devil take the flimsy and extravagant bauble! When I put on that cravat (fool that I was to do it!) I hung thirty-two good acres of vineyard round my neck."

Thus embellished, the Baron proceeds to Court and mingles with the throng of sightseers. He is pushed on by the crowd and at last finds himself outside the royal ante-room. Observing that people are admitted into it on giving their names, he announces himself, and is amazed to see every one begin to laugh :—

"Tous ceux de devant moy font d'abord volte-face,  
L'un à droit, l'autre à gauche, et tous si prestement  
Qu'il sembla que mon nom fust un commandement.  
' Un Baron !' dit l'huissier, ' Un Baron ! place, place,  
À M. le Baron ! que l'on ouvre de grâce !  
L'on croyait à la cour les barons trépassiez ;  
Mais pour la rareté du fait, dit-il, passez !'  
Je passe, et cet huissier crie encore : " Place, place,  
Messieurs, de main en main, au Baron de la Crasse.  
J'enrageois, quand je vis cent hommes me gausser. . . ."

That, however, did not prevent the Baron from knocking with all his might at the King's door, the sooner to be admitted. The usher within opened the door, briefly informed the Baron that he must not knock, but *scratch* at the royal door, and then slammed it in such a way that the Baron's

hair was caught in the latch. He now found himself in an attitude suggestive of listening:—

“ Il arrive un vieux duc, qui crioit ; ‘ Gare, gare !  
 Retirez-vous ’ dit-il, en s’adressant à moy,  
 L’on n’écoute jamais à la porte du roy.  
 ‘ Faites-la donc ouvrir pour finir mon martyre,  
 Et pour plus de vingt ans, monsieur, je me retire,’  
 Luy dis-je. ‘ Regardez si je suis malheureux ;  
 Depuis plus d’un quart d’heure on me tient aux cheveux ;  
 C’est le diable d’huissier, car je sens qu’il les tire.’  
 Le duc, me regardant, se prit si fort à rire  
 Que ce fut le plus grand de mes étonnements  
 De voir que ce vieillard pust rire si longtemps.  
 Chacun se relayoit pour me voir à son aise ;  
 Douze hommes reculoient, il s’en approchoit seize ;  
 Bref, on me venoit voir comme on fait un encan,  
 Ou comme un malheureux qu’on â mis au carcan.”

The end of the story was that the victim freed himself by cutting off the captive curl, and then returned to his furrows, a sadder and a wiser man.

The persons satirised in these and other plays were extreme examples of members of their class. It must never be forgotten that side by side with them there existed a large number of enlightened and educated country gentlemen, whose incomes enabled them to live with decency and whose culture, though different from, was not inferior to, that of the Court. Rapin, in his *Plaisirs du gentilhomme campestre*, declares him to be content with such simple joys as conversing with his wife, or reading by the fire in the winter evenings.

“ Quelque fois de tout soin delivre  
 D’un plus chaud habit revestu  
 Il lit dedans quelque bon livre  
 Qui monstre comme il faut ensuivre  
 Le beau chemin de la vertu.”

Such men were the lords and fathers of their village and the centre of its life. Their estates furnished employment to



the villagers, and domestic festivities were shared by master and servant. Madame de Sévigné's peasants enjoyed balls at her expense, and many tenants were shown a consideration which is sometimes imagined to be exclusively "modern." Some great lords took their duties as employers very seriously to heart. The Prince de Conti even went the length of writing a book on the "Obligations of the Great," and in this remarkable work he states that it is his duty to succour his neighbour in need, to comfort him in trouble, to correct his faults, to render him his due, to protect him against violence, and to be his avenger if he have suffered injury. This prince it was who held popular audiences twice a week in his government of Guienne and Languedoc, thereby giving the peasant redress from the tyranny of underlings and establishing personal relations between himself and his dependents.

One or two of the best managers of large estates in that age were women whose husbands had gone to the wars and whose sons were still in the nursery. The most singular of these was, perhaps, Madame de Saint-Balmont, a lady whose swordsmanship might well have been the envy of any soldier. She was in the habit of riding, sword at side, round her fields in times of disturbance, and personally attacking any marauder she happened to encounter. She is said to have once kept at bay three robbers, who had come to steal her plough-horses. Antoine Arnauld speaks of her as an amazon who rode like a man and was even capable of commanding troops. The following episode especially impressed the soldier-abbé. A cavalry officer took up his quarters on her land and behaved in a reprehensible manner. On being remonstrated with, he permitted himself to make a rude reply. The lady, very angry, sent him a challenge, which she signed, "Le Chevalier de Saint-Balmont." The duel took place, and the amazon, in doublet and hose, succeeded in disarming the soldier. She then made him this little speech: "You have, sir, been under the impression that your antagonist was the Chevalier de Saint-Balmont; but it is Madame de Saint-Balmont who returns your sword to you, praying you at the

same time to have, in future, more consideration for ladies." The vanquished officer departed, covered with confusion, and Madame de Saint-Balmont returned triumphant to her less strenuous avocations. Arnould describes her as having a fine face spoilt by smallpox, which defect was hailed by her as an advantage, because it caused her to look more like a man. He adds that when she was enjoying a period of peace at home, all her day was spent in works of piety, in prayer, and in visiting the sick of her parish, whom she succoured with "admirable charity."

Another striking example of capacity and diligence was Madeleine des Porcellets, Comtesse de Rochefort, whose diary has most fortunately come down to us. Her estate lay in the south, at Brancas, near Beaucaire. Here she lived incredibly laborious days, supervising her servants, buying and selling at the fairs, preserving, upholstering, building, weaving: educating her children and tending her own soul. Her stewardship lasted from 17th May 1689 to 31st December 1690, during which period her husband was away on military service. The diary is an astonishing monument of industry. "I got up in good time" (*i.e.* 3 or 4 A.M.), occurs like a chorus in each day's entry. No time was wasted in vain regrets for the absence of the Count, although his wife declared that she cared for nothing while he was away. It was perhaps in the hope of receiving extra news of him that she ordered the *Gazette* to be sent for her twice a week to Tarascon, whence her servants fetched it. She thus kept depression at bay, had her clavecin tuned, and gave her best attention to the management of "mon fils le Marquis," and "mon fils le Chevalier," both of tender years. Entries relative to these young persons occur frequently. In June the mother describes herself as spinning silk from a large number of cocoons to make clothes for her husband and baby sons, adding: "I have given my old skirts to Cordredoue, so that he may make frocks out of them for my son the Chevalier." These garments appear to have been ready for use in the second week of July, for the Chevalier was then formally

advanced from babyhood to a larger independence than was possible in swaddling clothes. "On 9th July I gave my son the Chevalier the use of his feet, and took him to the Capuchin Monastery, where I had a Mass said for him, and dedicated him to God with my son the Marquis." The latter was promoted to breeches on 14th October 1690. "And now," briefly adds his mother, "we must do our best to bring him up well, for the whole future of children depends upon their education."

Like the Grande Mademoiselle, Madame de Rochefort was determined that no one should get the better of her by fraud. She gave personal attention to everything and displayed an extraordinary knowledge of farming in the changes she made in the estate. On 20th May 1690, she writes: "I went to La Bégarde with my sister, and as we were coming back I noticed a piece of uncultivated land, which would be just the thing for a vineyard. I will have it made into one in the autumn. The said land will therefore have to be prepared by ploughing at the end of August. An expert has told me that this cannot cost more than 50 écus." Again: "On 8th July I went at 3 A.M. to Le Mazat de Coquillade to see my masons and my threshing floor. Those people would have spoilt the whole building for me if I had not been on the spot." (11th.) "I went to Le Mazat at day-break to finish having my sheaves threshed. I spent the whole day in keeping the masons at work. In the evening the corn was measured in my presence, and I found that there was only half as much as last year."

The encroachments of neighbouring land-owners were more especially to be resisted. "I went," says Madame de Rochefort on 20th June, "to see my field at Maubuisson. I was much mortified at seeing so little hay in it; we shall hardly have twelve cart-loads from it. I shall therefore sell none, for fear we should not have enough left. I observed that in this field the boundary marks were not in their right places, because Madame de Meudre has planted four willows on my land, and I resolved to speak to her about it so



that she might agree to put them back where they ought to be."

Holy-days were not spent in idleness, although the work done on them appears to have been of a more domestic nature. "On 2nd July, the Feast of the Visitation, I rose early to perform my devotions. After dinner I had M. de Rochefort's clothes shaken out and then put away in the wardrobe."

When the fair-time at Beaucaire came round, Madame de Rochefort was particularly busy. She seems not only to have sold and purchased merchandise herself, but also to have let part of her house for the storing of foreign goods, so that she was able to afford to buy twelve ivory-handled knives in 1690. In that year the space in her house had been so greatly bespoken by merchants that she was obliged to take down "the little cupboard in the vestibule to make room for extra bales of cloth waiting to be sent to the fair."

The following is Madame de Rochefort's record of a typical day of her life:—

13th June 1698.—"I got up early, and when I had given my household orders I paid fifty-one livres to M. Juet, so that I no longer owe him anything. I gave him all the tapestry to mend, after which he will repair the coverings of all my chairs and other furniture. I bargained with the wife of the man from Picardy to mend all my French point-lace for eight livres. They finished making the vats. I have settled to have the woodshed paved with cobbles, because otherwise the wood cannot be properly stored in it. On the same day I ordered the bailiff at Rochefort to sell my wine there. He has transferred one barrel of it to the butcher and the other one he is keeping for the harvest. Delose came to taste the wine and I demanded four livres for the barrellful (45 pints). I sent Gibert to the Island of Gueydan to enquire about the hay that the old tenant allowed to rot through carelessness. I spent much time in arranging papers.

"On 14th June I rose very early to arrange the barrels in



the cellar. The vats are made and the smaller cellars prepared for the fair. I am having a wooden tub made that will be firm on its stand, and in it I shall have the grapes pressed. That will be much more convenient. I was advised to sell the old tubs I had, but I made up my mind to keep one to use as a wash-tub. . . . A pewter decanter I have had made was sent home to-day. I have also had some dishes and two dozen plates remade. All my pewter has been rebaten and I have also had it stamped. I have sent 4 lbs. of soap to Pernes, where they are bleaching some thread for me as well as at Saint-Benoît. The same day I sent to M. Patron, the lacemaker, to know how much lace would be required for the liveries of my servants. He said I must order 160 yards of the wide sort and 60 yards of the narrow, and that for that 10 lbs of coarse silk besides 8 lbs of rather fine floss silk would be necessary. . . . I have given out 4 yards of thin red serge to trim the footmen's coats, and 2 yards of grey linen to make a pair of breeches. [My waiting-woman] arrived to-day from Rochefort, where she has been since my husband's departure superintending the wool-carders. They have now finished and delivered up all the wool ready to be spun. . . . She has brought back 100 chickens which were left of those I had bought. These, added to the 28 I had here before, bring the number up to 128. Besides these, I have 40 hens, 1 cock and 10 turkeys. The butcher at Rochefort has given [her] 3 livres. The same day I had the iron chest which stood in front of my sitting-room window taken away, because it was useless there, and I can use it at Radan. It weighs 120½ lbs. I have had a couch for the lower room and mattresses for the said couch made by Gaspard Giraud. . . . The new tenant at the Island of Gueydan came to represent to me that the late tenant, who has hardly any more of this year's harvest to collect, has, out of spite, allowed the wild oats to grow to maturity, so that the soil might remain full of the seeds. . . . Old Archias has been to see what truth there is in these complaints, and he reports that the late tenant ought to have mowed a big stretch of

land in which there are infinitely more wild oats than good ears of corn. . . .”

The diary unfortunately ceases on the return of the Comte de Rochefort, and we are unable to learn how his wife comported herself in more leisurely circumstances. Precarious journeys over flooded rivers, rare festivities at Tarascon or Beaucaire, the entertaining of a prelate or a royal emissary, probably broke the monotony of existence. But household management, the guidance of “mon fils le Marquis” along the devious paths of learning, and a due attention to the other inhabitants of the village, were certainly among Madame de Rochefort’s duties.

The relations between the family at the great house and its more plebeian neighbours naturally varied according to the character of the master. It must not be forgotten that the question of intercourse was both complicated and simplified by the fact that the country curé, chirurgien, notary and schoolmaster were in nearly every instance peasants. That is to say, they belonged by birth and profession respectively, to two distinct grades. Persons in whose minds learning, however slight, counted for something, were inclined to treat the curé especially with respect and familiarity. Those nobles on the other hand who based their behaviour towards others on the question of antecedents merely, regarded the priest and the doctor as indispensable servants. They respected them in their official capacity as the possessors of peculiar powers, but ignored them socially as persons owning not the least little fragment of a pedigree. It was easy enough to maintain this policy with regard to the lawyer and the apothecary. Their duties performed, they were invited to drink wine in the kitchen and to fraternise with the cook and the scullion who were probably their near relatives. Nor did they feel themselves humiliated by the evident scorn of my lord’s valet, who was of opinion that a fine gentleman dressed in cloth like himself was vastly superior to a poor devil who lived by cupping and bleeding, and who was reported to know how the interior mechanism of man is

constructed. Even a learned doctor, fresh from dissecting the bodies of criminals at Montpellier University, would have met with no greater respect. But few really skilled doctors penetrated into the country, and the native votaries of science were phenomenal in their ignorance. No wonder, then, that the noble's regard for learning, as exemplified in the only representatives of it he had met, was of the very slightest description. The relations of such a noble to his village curé were delicate and difficult to adjust. A few squires, as has been observed, saw in him merely a servant. A large number had an uncomfortable suspicion that his was a more amphibious nature. His low birth relegated him to the society of labourers and washerwomen. His slight knowledge of Latin raised him above his social equals and placed him in the singular position of having something his lord had not. His claim to be the ambassador of God introduced a new element into the problem, with which it was very difficult to deal. The honour due to the clergy was a frequent theme discoursed upon by pious mothers in the presence of their boys. But how can one say one honours a man whom one regards, socially, as the dirt beneath one's feet? Some persons found it easy enough to kneel in church while the priest, in his official capacity, sat. Yet the same persons, once outside the door, would hardly acknowledge his salute. Many people, on the other hand, felt the absurdity of such conduct and attempted a compromise. They never forgot that the priest was a peasant; indeed his only too frequent slovenliness and ignorance of the rules of manners made it impossible ever to do so. But they steadily fixed their attention on the rights of his office and tempered their condescension with a pale show of respect. That he was worthy of consideration in most cases is evident from many local records that have come down to us from the seventeenth century. The village priests were often very poor, and lived as simply as the humblest of their flock. The more wealthy among them owned a vineyard, a fruit-orchard, or a few cows. Most of them were only learned by comparison with their

neighbours. Some were very superstitious and ignorant; a few were extremely dirty. Here and there occurred instances of a parish priest who was a rogue. But it was chiefly among the richer clergy in towns that avarice and greed prevailed; the besetting sin of the country priest was usually apathy. There was always a large number of men who had been forced into the Church because they were unfit for the plough, besides a smaller and more ambitious contingent who had taken orders in the hope of advancement. These, of course, were a dead-weight upon the Gallican Church. But even good men suffered from the prevailing indifference. They began by performing their duties conscientiously if unintelligently; the sordid materialism of their flock soon began to damp whatever enthusiasm they possessed, and they fell back into the ranks of those who were no better than their neighbours.

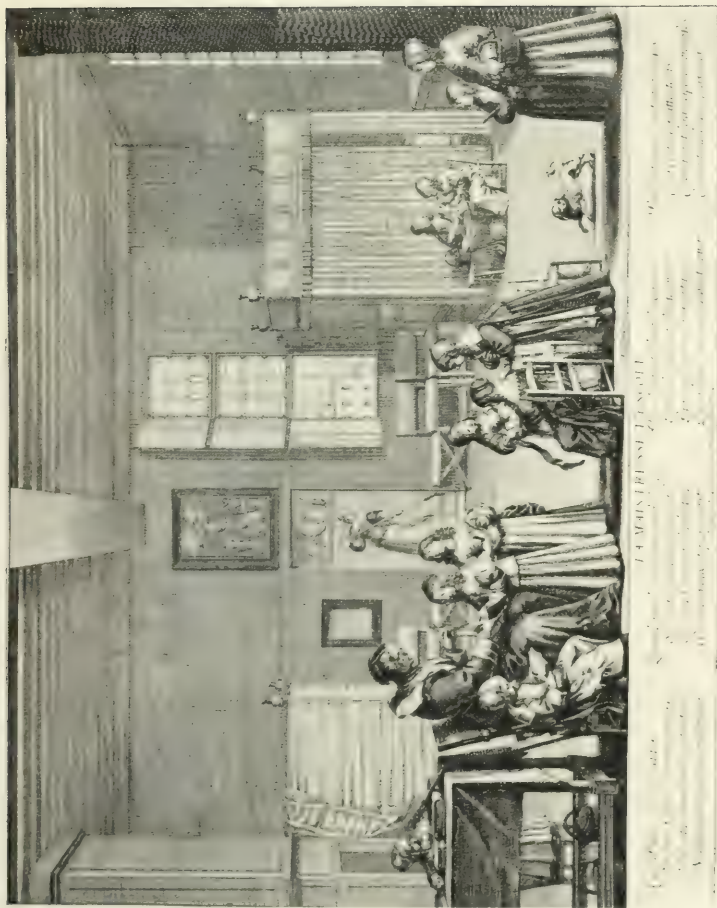
Another functionary who stood for culture and learning with even less justification was the village schoolmaster. In many cases he united the office with that of sacristan, and was thus in some measure covered by the mantle of the Church. In winter he inculcated a miscellaneous selection of facts into the minds of a handful of children squatting in front of him in an empty room, a barn, or an inn-parlour. In summer master and pupils threw study to the winds in favour of the far more important duty of field-work. In return for the information and the blows which he freely imparted to his pupils, the teacher received gifts of flour and other comestibles. In certain districts he dined in turn with the parents. Inventories of property left by schoolmasters at this period reveal the fact that they usually possessed but two rooms—one of them the empty one above-mentioned; the other their kitchen, bedroom, living-room and study. Here might be found half a dozen books, a frying-pan or two, a few tin spoons hung up on the wall and a locker for clothes. The garments were usually black, as a slight recognition of the fact that their wearer was a church officer. In some dioceses the bishop gave encouragement to learning



by subsidising the schoolmaster and enjoining the necessity of knowledge as a religious duty. In other districts the profoundest ignorance prevailed, especially among the girls, for whom little provision was made. It was said that in Nivernais, for instance, only six per cent. could sign their names. Towards the end of Louis XIV.'s reign, however, a reform in primary education was enjoined upon the nation by means of two royal orders (1694, 1698). These documents (especially that of 1698) are interesting. No attempt is made to disguise the fact that it was not solicitude for his people's intellectual welfare as much as a determination to root out heresy that impelled the King to issue these proclamations. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes had again filled France with the strife of tongues. Protestants were deprived, as far as possible, of the guardianship of their own children. Schools were now to be established in all haste in most villages, and parents were ordered to send up their boys and girls for instruction. This, in view of the primary object of the authorities, was religious. The pupils, "especially those of the so-called reformed faith,"\* were to be taught the Catechism and those prayers which were deemed necessary, and were taken to Mass every day. Then, as an afterthought, it was added that those who needed it were to be taught to read and write. The fact that these fine projects came to naught was due to lack of money rather than of zeal. The result was, however, no better for that, and the French peasant remained until the Revolution the victim of his own credulity, ignorance and superstition.

The chirurgien was not on a much higher level as a scholar than the schoolmaster. His position was a vacillating one between the peasantry and the bourgeoisie, since his functions as barber and hairdresser, as well as his medical proclivities, brought him into daily relations with both. There was keen competition for precedence in village society. The miller, in cloth coat and pompous wig, lorded it over the blacksmith, who was, however, himself by no means to be

\* Religion prétendue réformée, usually R.P.R



A DAME'S SCHOOL.  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY A. BOSSE



despised. The collector of the *gabelle* was a great though latent light in rustic circles, entirely eclipsing the curé and the schoolmaster, though he in his turn was put into the shade by the bailiff, whose wife laid claim to be called *madame* and take precedence of all the village dames. Such persons even bought patents of nobility in order to raise themselves above their neighbours. To do so was also an admirable step from a business point of view, for the initial outlay purchased immunity from certain taxes for ever afterwards. Peasants therefore who were rich enough, frequently adopted this expedient, and towards the end of the century travellers returning to their native village might recognise in the great M. de l'Étang or M. du Buisson the Dick, Tom or Harry of their youth. When the general depression in trade resulting from the Fronde was once over, it was among persons of this class that the greatest relative comfort prevailed. Their income was in most cases adequate to supply their needs, whereas the lesser country landlords were compelled to make more show with less money.

Village shopkeepers did not rank, as one might have expected, with the aristocracy of the village. They were for the most part very poor, and the value of their stock in trade was often under £12. M. Babeau in his *Vie rurale dans l'ancienne France*, cites the contents of a small store in Champagne in 1664. The list is as follows: "4 lbs of silk lace of divers colours, 1 lb. of sugar or thereabout, 12 yards of ribbon made of linen thread and wool, 10 quires of paper of both large and small size, half a gross of leather tags, 2 yards of silk and a few little articles of haberdashery." The value of all this splendour was £10. So small a stock presupposes a great paucity of buyers. This was indeed the case. The richer villagers bought their clothes in their market-towns or at the yearly fair of the district. The labourer seldom bought anything. His clothes were few, and coarse enough to be durable. Gold lace was far beyond his reach and sugar was an article of luxury. The outward trappings of his life therefore changed but seldom, and his



existence from cradle to grave, whether happy or unhappy, was monotonous unless violently disturbed by some outside influence. On the whole, the seventeenth century would have been an epoch of comparative comfort for the much-tried tillers of the soil, had not the quarrels of princes broken in upon their peace and crushed them almost out of existence. During the first years of the century the peasant was almost on the high road to happiness. Henri IV. had put to flight that lawlessness which was the countryman's chief enemy. Taxes were not excessive, food was plentiful. The mention of a sudden florescence of sham pearls or even gold ornaments on solid cloth dresses betokened a growing prosperity. Accounts of rustic dancing to the sound of the flute, of village games, of pretty feasts in honour of a patron saint, show that Jack and Jill were not as yet too permanently tired to enjoy themselves. Then followed the evil days of civil war, the horror of famine and the fear of death. From this the peasant emerged into the fierce glare of the great reign a shattered man. It took him many decades to recover himself; and that he did recover himself at all during that reign is but a further proof of the admirable vitality of the race to which he belonged.

From 1660 onwards, the cultivation of land became more systematic. Works on agriculture appeared on Parisian bookstalls, and here and there were to be found land-owners who farmed their estates in a manner approaching the scientific. The question of small holdings assumed local if not national importance during the reign of Louis XIV. Intelligent labourers looked forward to the moment when they might buy strips of land of which they would be master. The love of land as a possession is to this day the chief characteristic of the French peasant. In the seventeenth century it was more than a taste. The labourer felt that by this means alone could he keep firm his hold on life. It was his dependence that made his existence so precarious. Once given the means of being self-supporting, he felt himself equal to contending with the universe. But the fact that, generally

speaking, the circumstances of the very poor at this time were superior to those of the previous reign does not in any way imply prosperity. In 1656 the Intendant of La Marche, describing the troubles of his poorer neighbours, says that their manner of life makes them "black and livid, and nearly all of them hideous." He adds that envy and slander prevail, and that each man's one idea is to get the better of some one else. That the peasant remained the same in spite of the fair show of glory that Louis XIV. shed over France is evident from La Bruyère's laconic picture. It will be observed that he uses the identical adjectives that occurred to the worthy official who wrote thirty-three years before. "One sees," says La Bruyère's, "certain wild animals, male and female, scattered over the country, black, livid, and sunburnt all over, allied to the earth, which they search and rake up with invincible persistency. They have, as it were, an articulate voice, and when they raise themselves to their feet they show a human face. They are in fact men. At night they get them away to their dens, where they live on black bread, water and roots. They save other people the trouble of sowing, ploughing, and reaping in order to live, and therefore they deserve to share the bread they have helped to produce." It was in the corn districts such as that round Orleans that poverty chiefly oppressed the native. Those devoted to the rearing of cattle, such as Touraine and the Bourbonnais were in a less precarious state. Monteil even speaks of some provinces in which the houses must have had some affinity with the model cottages beloved of modern philanthropy. "In Nivernais you may go from village to village, and you will often be astonished to see a house covered with broom or mistletoe. Inside, the larger room, that is to say the big kitchen, is girded about with festoons of shining tin saucepans, furnished with massive corniced cupboards or dressers loaded with plates, and at the end of the big table, between the beds of the father and mother, the hearth always blazing and enclosing within its wide circumference the oven where the bread is baked." In Limousin,

on the other hand, the peasants lived in windowless hovels, and in Poitou the conditions were even worse. "The walls," says a traveller in 1672, "as well as the roof and the door were of straw, and there was nothing to prevent the winter winds from blowing straight through the house." The inside of the average peasant's hut certainly resembled a den. The floor was of beaten earth and the ceiling very low. In the finer houses of the more civilised northern districts glass windows were sometimes seen. There, the fireplace, flanked by copper saucepans, was as of old the centre of family life. Beds let into the wall like berths in a ship and shut in by doors were common in Brittany. Some were so high up that a short ladder had to be used by the intending occupant. Other peasants in fairly prosperous circumstances slept in solemn four-posters, hung with red or green serge curtains. Some even indulged in silk fringes. Feather beds were common enough in Champagne, but in Brittany and Auvergne the natives chiefly slept on bales of straw in coarse oakum covers. The furniture of all but the very poor consisted of a table on trestles, a few straw-bottomed chairs, and a dresser with an array of pewter plates. The room was lighted by lamps, candles, or torches, according to the district. The salt-box was always a prominent feature. Ornaments were rare. We read of a miller having a small looking-glass in an ebony frame, but he was doubtless a pretentious person, and in no way representative of his class. Table-cloths were used in some families and napkins were not unknown among the fastidious. A desire to ape the fashions of the bourgeoisie was always an indication of dawning prosperity. In matters of dress this tendency showed itself especially. The game of general post which had taken place among the social orders during the reign of Henri IV. had introduced new ideas into the peasant's mind. Hitherto he had been content to wear the invariable and historic garb of his caste; namely, a kind of holland overall, perhaps a short coat tied with cords, wide linen breeches, big leather or buckram gaiters and hob-nailed shoes. The dress of the women varied according to

district, not according to date. But on the death of Henri, the peasant had so far begun to imitate the class above him that in 1614 the bourgeoisie demanded that "Servants and maids be forbidden to wear silk, silver and any kind of dress unbecoming their condition." The men now began to wear their hair tied with ribbon. The costume above described gave way before a light tunic, worn with a little plaited linen collar. This, in its turn, was ousted by a suit of grey, black or russet cloth, consisting of wide breeches and a cape over a short waistcoat adorned with silver buttons. In the north, wooden shoes were worn on working days and leather ones on Sundays. Very poor men wore high shoes on their bare feet, although usually those employed on farms were provided with a pair of stockings as part of their wages. The women were more smart but less up-to-date in dress than their men-folk. It was useless for them to try to keep pace with the ephemeral fashions affected by city women. They therefore contented themselves with monumental dresses of rich material made to last for generations. A rich peasant's wife on Sundays often wore a gold cross round her neck and a silver ring on her finger. Her bodice was of brocade or figured satin, red, blue, or orange-coloured. Silver lace adorned the front. Her skirt was ample and the bodice stiffened with bones, the effect of which was certainly hideous. Flowered satin cuffs and velvet bands were quite common in richer districts. In poor provinces serge was "the only wear." In very poor ones rags of any sort sufficed. Colours as well as material were more or less symbolic. In Rouergue girls dressed in cheerful colours, such as green or orange or bright red. Blue betokened the sobered spirits of middle life. The old lapsed chiefly into the Franciscan brown that betokened perfect acceptance of God's will.

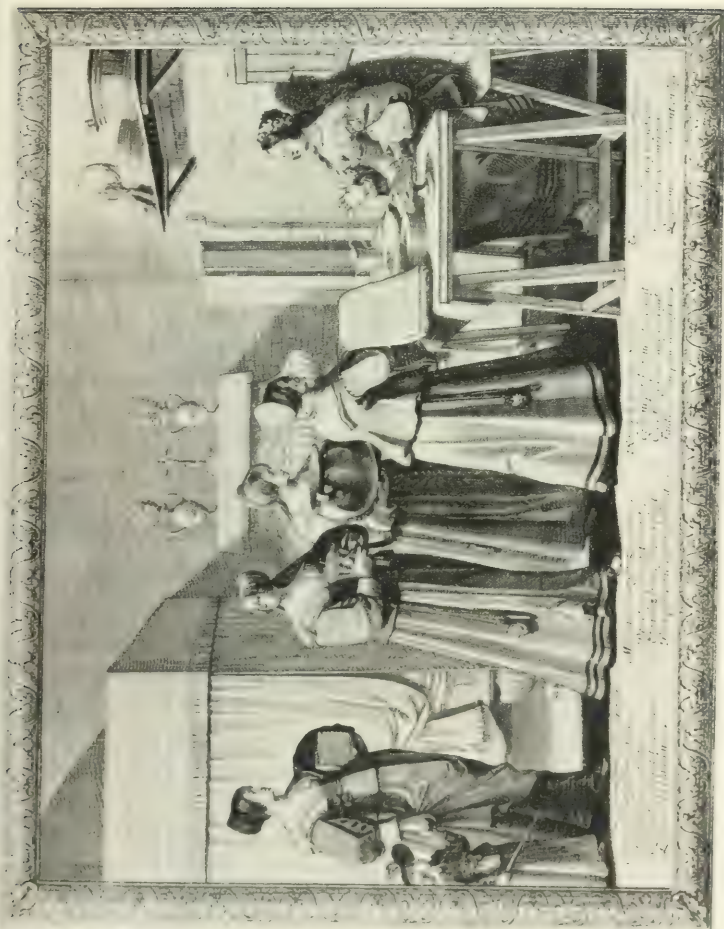
The food of the peasant varied little in nature. In times of penury he simply ate less. Broth was then, as it is now, the principal food of rural France. In rich households it consisted of water or weak stock, into which butter, eggs or



milk, seasoned with pepper, had been stirred. Meat, chiefly pork or salt beef, was eaten at least once on Sundays. In poor districts things were very different. There was many a village in which meat was only eaten on Shrove Tuesday, Easter Day, and the feast of the patron Saint. The vintage, a wedding or perhaps a wake occasioned some kind of feast, but the fare thereat was scanty and the wine scarce. In bad years cider, plum juice or even water were drunk. The latter was, we learn, "contrary to the nature of the peasant." Under normal circumstances bread was made of oats, rye, barley, peas or chestnuts. It was never white, though usually not quite black. When the harvest had failed it was made of a little barley boiled down with bracken roots and acorns beaten to a pulp. M. Babeau observes that in Dauphiné bread was cooked five times a year, and sometimes kept as long as eighteen months. It became dry very quickly, and the housewife was therefore obliged to break it with a pickaxe and soak it in water before the family could eat it.

Wages naturally varied greatly according to the economic conditions prevailing at the moment. In 1601 the Mayor of Paris issued an order, fixing the wages of the head ploughman on a farm at 45 livres, and those of the others at 25. The head shepherd was entitled to 36; the housekeeper and general manageress, being a woman, received only 12, although her work was the most responsible. This injustice is not without parallel even in the Golden Age into which modern politics have ushered their descendants.

During the Fronde, wages were entirely disorganised. Labour was scarce, and where there was any corn left to sow, peasants could put almost any price upon their services. But money and food were both so scarce that few employers and servants could come to terms (*see* Chap. V.). After 1660, the old scale seems to have again prevailed. Farm labourers received from 10 to 30 livres a year, besides one pair of stockings, one pair of wooden or leather shoes and one shirt. Monteil informs us that in Burgundy the shepherd received



BOURGEOIS BRIDE RECEIVING PRESENTS

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY A. DENSE



60 livres a year, the carter 20, the kitchenmaid 45. But in Brie and Béauce usual wages seem to have obtained, and we find the labourer demanding 20 livres—a very usual sum.

This pay usually sufficed for the daily needs of the family. Occasional expenses, such as the dowering of daughters, were provided for in other ways. That these expenses were heavy cannot be doubted. The bride was expected to possess three or four dresses, to provide an imposing bed, with appropriate hangings, sheets of hemp or linen, a locker, perhaps a sheep or a pig and, wherever possible, a considerable sum of money. In order to meet future obligations of the kind, many peasants' daughters joined societies having the dowering of poor brides for their object. One of these, in 1709, paid out 405,850 livres in dowries, besides giving each bride 4 to 8 septiers\* of rye, two complete costumes, a bed with a counterpane, a wardrobe with a lock and a fairly ample equipment of household linen. Such a store constituted a comfortable capital on which to begin housekeeping, and always formed a substantial bulwark between the family and the most grinding type of poverty during the experimental period of early married life.

It will be seen that hard as was the lot of the peasant of old France in the seventeenth century, at least there were districts and decades in which he could boast of some small degree of well-being. The terror of taxes was, it is true, ever before his eyes. If the neighbouring seigneur was of the fiendish type held up to execration in *A Tale of Two Cities*, then his case was indeed a desperate one. Whatever misfortune attacked France, the peasant was, of course, the first to suffer. But under normal circumstances his life was not without happiness. He had time for amusement and organised entertainments. There is something both romantic and delicately moving about the remembrance of games that graced an age long since added to "yesterday's seven thousand years." They are so often the last relic of a heathen worship of which the very name is now forgotten.

\* One septier or setier = 12 bushels.



Even where their origin is less remote, they are so firmly rooted in the ancient soil whence they sprang, that they end by becoming the articulate voice of the people's inner consciousness. The skill of the Church in appropriating heathen ceremonies and enduing them with more wholesome meaning is a matter of ancient history. Superstition is a tenacious demon, who maintains his hold on the ignorant to this day. But in the seventeenth century his struggle with the Church was of a more formidable nature—so greatly formidable, in fact, that on occasion the two effected a compromise and for the sake of peace went into partnership. To cut the mistletoe on New Year's Day was a concession to the fiend masquerading as loyalty to the custom of our ancestors. Wedded to the practice of collecting the proceeds of New Year festivities for the lighting of the parish church, the mistletoe-bough became but a spoke in the Church's yearly revolving wheel. The midsummer fires centred round the feast of John the Forerunner. The wildness of springtime exuberance was licensed by the sanction of the Carnival. Other pagan survivals there were which could not by any means be enlisted in favour of religion, and such the clergy found themselves forced to condemn. Among them were the many pretty customs connected with the decking of Druid stones and dancing round the dolmens of Brittany. On Sundays in June, boys and girls, decked respectively with green ears of corn and a chaplet of blue flax flowers, performed dances on the sites of prehistoric bloodshedding. The object of these meetings was nominally amusement; yet that there was something dark and baleful in the regard paid to the habitations of departed powers, is evident from other manifestations of the sentiment. Spinning was confessedly a most desirable employment for girls; playing games was owned to be a lawful relaxation. But directly these two occupations became, as it were, symbolic and sacramental, undertaken as an obligation at a fixed time and in a fixed place, the Church detected therein a modicum of superstition. The circumstances attending on the particular

ceremonies of the *fileries* or spinning-nights made it impossible to transform them into something that the Church could at least tolerate. They were by implication dangerous to mind and body. Women who retired into caves at night to spin and tell unhallowed legends of spells and diabolic influences were believed to be courting the attention of the Prince of Darkness himself; and in addition to a visit from the fiend, they were liable to attacks from murderers and thieves. In any case, the practice was a cause of scandal to many, and certain bishops unreservedly condemned it as unchristian. Their attempt to turn the *fileries* decently held indoors into a kind of working-party, at which the Lives of the Saints were read aloud, was hardly successful. In these safe and pious gatherings the elements of fear and witchery were sorely missed. Boredom took their place. The waters were no longer stolen and hence no longer sweet. Superstitious ceremonies gradually fell into disuse in more civilised districts. That the belief in a benevolent version of the older unseen powers prevailed, is one of the facts which George Sand was wont to emphasise with a loving persistence. She felt with the peasant, and his vague reveries were transformed by her bright imagination into something momentous and symbolic. She is in truth his lover, historian and apologist.

Games that craved the wholesome sunlight—"dance and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth"—occupied a large part of the peasants' holiday rest. Country dances, especially the *branle*, in which the wooden shoes struck the earth in time and rhythm, were the staple amusement of Sunday afternoons. Outside the village inn men drank and danced and wrestled: practised high leaping and "sped the flying ball." In Provence and Burgundy, boys were more especially skilled at exercises to-day included under the name of sports. In Normandy and Brittany, games requiring a trained eye were generally esteemed. Shooting at the butts, throwing missiles, and the historic game of bowls, chiefly flourished in these districts. Blindman's buff and hide-and-seek were then, and

always will be, played everywhere. Girls had a series of games of their own. One of these was not unlike kiss-in-the-ring. The boys formed an attacking party, with a view to capturing a girl protected by a circle of friends.

The besiegers sang :—

“ We have come to ask her in marriage.”

The girls replied :—

“ Oh no, no, no, you would beat her with rage.”

In the end the heroine in the middle was always caught and taken off to “*durance vile*,” her companions meanwhile lamenting the fate of one thus caught and eaten by the “*wolf*,” brought low as the plum shaken from the tree, dishevelled as the rose that loses its petals in the gale.

Before closing this chapter, a word must be said as to the nature of the so-called tyranny of noble lords in country places. That such tyranny existed is only too true. Selfish seigneurs had it in their power to make the life of a peasant more intolerable than the hell of mediæval frescoes. Some were so near akin to the brigands that they did not hesitate to seize peasants who were reputed to be rich, in order to extort money from them. Other nobles did not respect the families of their tenants, and thought that no liberty was too great for them to indulge in. Very few would not have been shocked had any one dared to suggest that the peasant had rights of his own. Almost all were ready to sacrifice his permanent to their temporary convenience or pleasure. Every one was of opinion that to make game of him did not enter into the category of ill-bred amusements, and that resentment on his part was simply laughable. For instance, a proprietor named Charnace possessed a park down which ran a long and splendid avenue. The vista through this avenue was spoilt by the presence of a peasant's hut. The inhabitant of the hut was obnoxious to Charnace because he refused to sell his property, and thus persisted in spoiling the view from the great house. After

a series of fruitless negotiations, the rich man hit upon an expedient for ridding himself of the eyesore. He sent for the peasant, who was also a tailor, and ordered him to make him a suit as quickly as possible, as he had received an unexpected summons to Court. He then announced that as he feared the tailor might dawdle in his work, it should be taken in hand then and there. The man began to cut and sew, was paid for each thing as he did it, and fed as well as he could desire. Meanwhile Charnace ordered the hut to be carefully taken down and built up again two gunshots away from the avenue. That done, he released his prisoner one evening at dusk, and told him to return to his home as nothing further was required of him. The tailor went down the avenue and wandered about in bewilderment, looking for his house. A careful search revealed not the slightest trace of it. The supposed site was covered with sand and as smooth as the rest of the avenue, and the undergrowth on both sides appeared undisturbed. The frightened peasant now began to believe himself a victim of magic. It was not until the next morning that he came upon his hut; and when he discovered that his key fitted, and that everything inside was untouched, his growing suspicion that the devil was in it became a certainty. He only learnt the truth long after the event. His anger was very great. A lawsuit was the only means of redress that occurred to him, but so Homeric was the laughter that the "impertinence" of such a project aroused among his fine neighbours, that the peasant relapsed into a tame submission. He was obliged to realise that when His Majesty himself deigned to laugh at a man, that man became a laughing-stock for all the world. Had he engaged upon a lawsuit, no Rhadamanthus could have been found to see him justified. The matter would have been laughed out of court, and Charnace would have enjoyed the further pleasure of seeing his victim made notoriously ridiculous.

The cruel wrongs suffered by the poor of the seventeenth



and eighteenth centuries in France were not all inflicted by the hand of Dives. The peasant was in a great measure his own tormentor. The bourgeoisie was also not entirely blameless in the matter. The rich themselves had much to complain of. They were the victims of a social system which made the temptation to avarice and greed a singularly strong one. Their faults were particularly hateful ones in the eyes of modern philanthropists, but the weight of their personal trials is one which we are unable to estimate correctly. The peasant was shamefully entreated; his ultimate retaliation was still more disgraceful. No one class of society is intrinsically better than another, and in the vexed question of class interests all are equally selfish. The strife of mutual recriminations was brought to a head in 1789, and in the course of the struggle all parties had undergone equal though not contemporaneous suffering. Both noble and peasant started on their new pilgrimage in a new spirit. Much nonsense was talked about the rights of man, but the first word of the phrase had now become impregnated with a vital and identical significance for both parties. The experiment of the Revolution produced mutual respect as its result. National development had now advanced far enough for justice to become at least a catchword.

## CHAPTER IX

### CULTURE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

ART is no doubt long, but its position in the house of life is fluctuating. To-day our love for it is of an economical description. We go to picture-galleries to study "values," but the purchase of a picture is usually too great an undertaking even for those who can afford it. We do not stand upon ceremony with the Nine Muses. It is rather they who must show deference to the whim of their patron for the moment. In the seventeenth century it was otherwise. The sixteenth century had passed, bearing away with it the springtime freshness of a new enthusiasm. Persons no longer bought statues and looked at pictures because they loved them and could not do without them. Still less did they treat artists with spontaneous respect. He who patronised the arts now did so of set purpose. The spirit of the age had determined, with a certain deliberate cynicism that magnificence should at all costs be its distinguishing mark: the arts were magnificent: the arts were therefore bound to the wheels of its triumphal car. All tended towards the grandiose. Faun-like caprice now fled away into the wild, and in the pioneering towns of France especially, art became official, soon conventional, and finally meretricious. Love for art grew cold, but respect for it amounted to superstition. The line and rule methods which prevailed in other departments of life now sought to curb the extravagance of genius. Those branches of art which already enjoyed a recognised position were, of course, the first to be trimmed to suit the task of connoisseurs. Painting and sculpture and high drama became increasingly correct. Those arts, on the other hand, which had no such position, benefited by the prevailing demand for anything that bore

the name of art. It was felt that even the small industries and minor accomplishments of the nation might be pressed into the service of French magnificence. First, however, it was necessary to draw them out of their seclusion and to render them presentable in the eyes of Europe. Thus in the attempt to bring them up to the level of the rest, these minor arts found their salvation. Comedy and conversation, as well as technical industries, were developed until they escaped from their astonished trainers and became as great as, and even more glorious than, their elder brethren, because they had all the advantages of youth and freshness on their side. But even they were touched by the leaden fingers of convention, and among them there are few that are not mute in the presence of the human soul.

The art of which the greatest number of examples have come down to us is probably that of architecture. A cultured courtier once having charged Frederick II. with persistently neglecting men of letters, that monarch replied: "No patronage of mine could ever have served them as well as my present habit of ignoring them." The remark is acute, and it is unfortunate for French art that the descendants of Henri of Navarre had not Frederick's humility. It was their perhaps not unnatural belief that in the sun of their favour all healthy growths must flourish, all ill weeds fade away. The cult of art is an indication of health in a nation's life. It was therefore the King's duty to foster it, to guide it into orthodox channels and, above all, to keep it there. From the time of Henri IV. onwards, the patronage of men of any sort of talent became systematic and as much the King's business as the holding of councils or the state attendance at church. Henri IV. was the first to perceive the "strategic" importance of a judicious countenancing of art. He was also sincerely anxious to beautify the city which was, to him, so well worth a Mass. "As soon as he was master of Paris," writes a contemporary, "one saw nothing but masons at work." Artists from over the Alps had not as yet ceased their northward pilgrimage, and the

Italian style still retained sufficient vitality to hold in check, or at least temper, the dawning classicism of the later age. Stone garlands blossomed round windows and doors. Pilasters pressed themselves against the red brick of the houses. Inside, rooms led into one another, so that the eye might enjoy a perspective of apartments *à perte de vue*. All was airy and comfortable. The lovely idiosyncrasies of the Middle Ages had vanished, it is true; but architects and painters had not as yet been called upon to kiss the iron rod wielded by the ghost of the Roman empire. The Place Dauphine stood self-conscious and triumphant before the public eye. The Gallery of the Louvre was being continued by Du Pérac. In the country, Government agents and the richer merchants were building manors with steep roofs and broad light passages. Nothing was as yet weighty or oppressive.

During the reign of Henri's son, architecture became more imposing and infinitely less alluring. Incrustations of the outer walls of houses grew rarer. A palace now inspired awe rather than a cheerful and familiar admiration. None but a staid and collected manner suited the pompous staircases and wide halls of mid-seventeenth-century France. With the accession of Louis XIV., nothing short of majesty adequately met the case. To run in the presence of thirty pairs of columns would have seemed sacrilege. We owe great thanks to Mansard for his device of breaking the severity of his roofs by means of projecting windows. We owe still more to him and to other artists for their consummate skill in ringing changes on a theme which was in its essentials invariable. The palace of Versailles is an admirable instance of the two extremes possible to this style of building. The dreariness of its uniform structure is frightening, and its decoration is in places trite, if not vulgar. But the generous space it occupies, and the masterful way in which all is made subservient to the one object of its building—that is, to provide a dwelling for the royal splendour of France—has in it something great. Few people can love Versailles; but fewer still



can look down its "gallant walks," or see the great staircases unfurling themselves, without feeling something of their ceremonial dignity.

Domestic furniture and its attendant arts underwent the same process of evolution. Henri IV. was the first French sovereign who deliberately encouraged home industries. Workmen were sent to foreign countries to study the best methods of work. Factories were founded or enlarged, and placed directly under royal patronage. Glass made at Meudon, china at Nevers, and above all tapestry woven at the great manufactory of the Gobelins, soon began to oust Italian products from the public esteem. It is said that the *Jardin des Plantes* was founded with a view to providing curious plants to serve as models for embroidery and tapestry. The gardens of the Tuileries were planted with mulberry trees, for the use of the silk-spinners, and the galleries under the Louvre were let to workmen who were artists in their particular branch of work.

All these industries flourished during the short reign of their earliest royal patron. His martial son had other interests, so that the new activities of the nation, as yet too young to walk alone, made little or no progress. It was not until Colbert rose to power that native trade regained its former high position. The only difference was that artists, once the masters of the work in hand, were now the humble executors of another person's orders. Fancy and imagination knew themselves to be unfashionable. The gorgeous brasswork foliage that clung to tables and cupboards did so according to rule. The same symbols and the same heavy majesty met the eye at every turn. The imposing patterns on the brocades of the period were calculated to show to advantage in vast halls, just as the patches worn on the face at court were of abnormal size, so that they might be seen at a great distance.

Pictorial art also suffered the same tutelage. The works of the great painters who so undeniably add to the glory of Louis XIV., testify to the progress (and incipient downfall)

of national culture at this period. Poussin, who lived most of his life at Rome, owes the severe beauty of his work to his aloofness from the French Court. Other painters who worked at and for the Court gained thereby much dignity of manner, but lost any native freshness they might otherwise have displayed. The painted portraits of the century are very fine, as are also the engraved portraits of Edelinck and Nanteuil. Nothing could exceed the acumen displayed by Philippe de Champagne in his methods of portrait-painting. "Lely," said Pope, "painted 'the languid eye that speaks the melting soul':" Philippe de Champagne rather painted the intelligence of men. Richelieu was never more decidedly a statesman than he is in his portraits by Champagne. The ridiculous, so often lurking behind the solemn paraphernalia that encumbered the average seventeenth-century picture, is quite absent from his works. The slight form of mortal man, overwhelmed by adjacent columns of Titanic size, and curtains wide enough to span a mountain pass, does not always impress the beholder in the way intended by the artist. But with Champagne the case is different, although even he could not dispense with the signs of temporal power deemed essential by his august sitters. It was his especial talent to use them, not abusing them. The curtains and gold tassels are not the first and last things to catch the eye. There is fine personality expressed in the painted faces. They are what his nation would describe as *digne*; faces of men to be relied upon, and to be respected in all their ways; great, even when most far astray from the safe and sanctioned road.

The religious art of the seventeenth century only too well illustrated the temper of contemporary religion. It is, generally speaking, official, unimaginative and often grandiloquent, and the presence of a few great artists among the throng of makers of pictures only serves to draw attention to the lack of artistic feeling displayed by the rest. Lesueur's pictures have the air of being the work of a saint who was in his leisure moments a seventeenth-century gentleman.

They are clear and direct, though perhaps a little sombre. Their greatest charm lies in the conviction with which each episode is accepted and recorded. The artist knows exactly what ideas he intends to convey to the beholder. There is no contradiction or confusion, and Lesueur goes directly towards his goal without distraction. He is, in short, a great artist.

Molière's friend, Mignard, belonged to an entirely different category. His life was chiefly spent in painting the portraits of great ladies, while their friends stood around and entertained them with "impromptu" verses painfully composed overnight. Mignard's industry was great, and it is possible to enjoy his French elegance and seventeenth-century charm in almost any large gallery. He also understood the power of the human eye. There is a certain pathos even in the most characterless eyes he painted. It is a curious thing that one of the first thoughts inspired by the sight of some smiling lady looking out of his canvas is the reflection that "she died full long ago." The ribbons and laces and the frail fair skin somehow speak and cry aloud that they are temporal. There is even something Greek in this peculiarity of the least Greek of painters.

Pictures other than portraits or illustrations of religious themes were not greatly admired during this period in which man and his soul were alone thought worthy of serious attention. "Take away that rubbish," said Louis XIV., on seeing some *genre* pictures by Teniers in his room. Painters of this type thus felt themselves at a disadvantage in a too greatly gilded Court, and many of them left the country to seek one more accommodating beyond the Alps.

But there is one form of art well represented in this pompous age, which cannot fail to give very real pleasure; that is the work of the engravers, who felt the humour and the pathos of everyday-life. Nothing could be more entertaining or instructive than a collection of engravings of, for instance, Abraham Bosse. Here one may see men and manners, the interior of shops, of rooms, of churches filled



Mlle. DE LA VALLIÈRE  
FROM A PAINTING BY NOCET AT VERSAILLES





with people living and moving unaffectedly, the dilemma of one not knowing which belt to choose, the street arab rejoicing in the gutter with his kind, the fine lady reposing on a sofa—all were noted by this delightful artist.

The same general principles that regulated the art of the seventeenth century also apply to the drama of the period. The subject is a vast one, and cannot be dealt with here. No idea can be gained of the great and touching beauty of high tragedy in the hands of Racine, or of the tedium of inferior work, except by reading the plays themselves. Nor could a better sketch be found of the actual representation of such plays than that in the first scene of M. Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The theatres in which performances of this description took place were not numerous. The *Hôtel de Bourgogne* in Paris was the first theatre of any note. Though founded some years earlier, it did not begin to attract attention until about 1615. It was then often hired by wandering bands of players, who acted Italian farces, of which Molière's *Médecin volant* is a glorified reminiscence. The next theatre to be established was in the *Marais*. This house enjoyed the patronage of Richelieu and the support of really good actors, such as Jodelet. With the opening of the *Illustre Théâtre* in 1647 began the golden age of the French stage, for here Molière appeared before his provincial tour, and here was laid the foundation of that high tradition in dramatic art which was followed by all actors until after his death. The *Petit Bourbon*, the scene of Molière's latter triumphs and that most closely associated with him, soon became the most fashionable of Parisian theatres. Molière's company became the "King's troupe" in 1665, and the profession of actor now conferred prestige. Louis had declared it to be an honourable one. Actors were sometimes persons of good social position, and even the most feather-brained among the fops of the period paid the stage the compliment of perpetrating an occasional play.

The *Tartuffe* episode marked the beginning of the end of theatrical prosperity in the seventeenth century. The Church saw in this play a parody of devotion and an attack on religion. *Tartuffe* was preached against, censured, and finally condemned. Religious but theatre-loving persons were now compelled to take their stand on one side or the other. The Church prevailed, and from that moment dramatic art began to decline. Music took its place for a short time, until that, too, was deemed too worldly a distraction by the old King and his second wife.

The theatres themselves were often enough gloomy halls, insufficiently lighted by candles. Round the walls there were boxes, but in the pit the audience was obliged to stand. In the early days of the century, and in poor theatres generally, the play did not begin until the manager thought that enough people had assembled to make it worth while. In the provinces the actors even paraded the streets in their costumes to attract people into the hall. How miserable was the life of a third-rate actor may be gathered from that strange book, written by Madame de Maintenon's first husband, and entitled *Le Roman comique*. The makeshifts, the fatigue and the ignominy of such a life are there most tellingly portrayed. Parisian actors who had made their name were in a far better position. Their theatres were sometimes fine places. The walls were decorated and refreshments were sold at counters running down one side. A certain degree of order was also maintained, although quarrels between the spectators and occasionally with the actors were not infrequent. The common herd surged to and fro in the pit, while the fine world languished and whispered in boxes, or, unfortunately for the performers, on the stage itself. "A dreadful habit," writes one, "prevails to-day at the theatre. Both sides of the stage are occupied by young men on straw-bottomed chairs, who are too high and mighty to go to the pit. They succeed in spoiling everything." The heroic couplets were declaimed amid a running fire of comment from these gay young sparks,

and the *vraisemblance* of the piece was further marred by the appearance of Brutus or Alexander in lace collar and beribboned breeches. Of acting proper there was very little. Each person recited his part with fine gestures but without stirring from the spot more than he was obliged. This was in one way an advantage, because under such circumstances few distractions occurred to draw away the attention of the audience from the play itself. Men loved good verse in Corneille's day even more than they love it now, and the audience listened with a critical appreciation to the alexandrine rolling gloriously from the actor's lips. Most people then knew good poetry from bad, although from reasons of policy much that was bad was allowed to pass muster as good. But on the whole the literary taste of the seventeenth century was very just.

The standard of criticism to be accepted by the age was set nominally by the Academy, actually by a small circle of really cultivated people, who encouraged one another in the creation and criticism of literature. The founding of the French Academy by Richelieu furnishes but one more instance of his extraordinary singleness of aim. He was determined that no profession in the country should be in a position to boast of independence of royal control. Art and literature should be the servants of an absolute monarch, as much as the army or the instruments of local government. In 1635, therefore, the Cardinal instituted a body of forty scholars to be known as the French Academy. The number was invariable, and election to this select company was held out as a bait to induce all literary persons to write on such subjects and in such a way as the King desired. The paralysing effect of such an institution on spontaneous art at once made itself felt. Authors who desired recognition instinctively fell into the methods of existing academicians. It was vain to hope for election at the hands of a cabal of one's own, for the first rule of the constitution was "No person shall be admitted to the Academy without the approval of Monseigneur." Few men had sufficient courage



in that iron-bound age to flout official recognition and to trust for advancement to the intrinsic merit of their work. La Fontaine was one of the few great men of his time who never desired and never obtained such recognition. Authors outside the magic circle (and even a few of those inside) were fain to break into disrespectful laughter at its very mention, for very soon election to the Academy became a mere farce. Noblemen who hardly wrote but who posed as literary patrons were admitted into its ranks. This association of scholars and pedants, of clever men and fools, inevitably produced much friction and many unseemly disputes. "At the meeting," wrote Furetière, himself a member, "he who shouted the loudest was usually agreed with. Some repeated like an echo what the others had said, but usually two or three members spoke at the same time. When five or six did so, one of the remaining members perhaps read, one laid down the law, two conversed, one slept, one turned over the leaves of some book." A running fire of anecdotes beguiled the time for those who did not care to pay attention, so that it was necessary to state the subject of the debate again and again because there was always some one who had not been listening.

The results accomplished by the Academy were exactly those that one might have expected. It was no foster-mother of budding genius, but rather a careful censor of unrestrained youth in the literary sphere. Its dictionary is a monument of careful labour. It may have fallen into the error of snubbing one or two great men among a host of minor persons who perhaps deserved a snub. It may have chilled art into a heavy torpor. But it did much to make the language great, and to preserve for it that peculiar and sonorous beauty which had lain dormant in French words until evoked by Corneille and his peers.

Such, then, was the official guardian of the French language. The tutelage of its unofficial guardians was perhaps even more catholic; it was certainly more wholesome.

These self-appointed and not unconscious stewards

belonged to two classes. The first consisted of a group of fine ladies and their attendant squadron of literary men, whose primary hope it was to remodel French society on a basis of culture and honourable feeling. The second class was composed of the more unintelligent imitators of these pioneers, that is to say of persons of inferior social standing, who thought to out-Herod Herod by an exaggerated culture, and to whom Molière did summary justice in *Les Précieuses ridicules*.

The founder of the pioneering school was a woman of whom so many excellent lives have been written that the merest sketch of her activities will here suffice. Catherine de Vivonne, daughter of a French ambassador at Rome, was born in 1588 and married in her early teens to Charles d'Angennes, who became Marquis de Rambouillet in 1611. Her early life in Italy, and above all her Italian mother, fostered in her a feeling for the refinements of a cultivated life. The vulgarities of the French Court roused in her a physical abhorrence. At the age of twenty she gave up the attempt to play the part of courtier. Noise, heat, even the light of the sun, tried her delicate health. The coarse jests and above all the thoughtless cruelties of men at Court disgusted her. Retirement appeared to her to be the better part, and from that time onwards she never again appeared in society, although she was delighted to receive her friends at home. A few years of desultory entertaining inspired her with a highly original idea. Men and women, she argued, rejoice in scandal and lapse into cruelty and slander because no higher ideals have been offered to them. They have nothing to discuss except the follies of their neighbours, and in nowise suspect that conversation is in itself one of the most exquisite of pleasures. Their minds are slipshod, unconscientious, inaccurate, and their language naturally follows on the same downward slope. If they were insensibly drawn from mean habits of thought and trained how to talk, and what to talk about, empty bragging about honour would soon be replaced by true and honourable feeling. Women

would in this become the teachers of men, and in place of an insulting gallantry, a solid respect for womanhood might arise to be the salvation of society.

Madame de Rambouillet at once set herself to try the experiment. Her house, which she had designed herself, was an ideal one for entertaining small parties. She had insisted on having the staircase on one side instead of in the middle of the building, so that upstairs a long suite of rooms ran unbroken from end to end. The garden was quaint and full of flowers. In the rooms there were interesting things at which to look. The very wall-hangings showed originality, for they were made of blue velvet at a period when it had occurred to no one else to break away from the traditional red or buff. In the cupboards there were curious fragments of Eastern carving. Books were piled up on little tables instead of being ranged in perpetual confinement behind glass. For twenty-five years, until the marriage of her daughter in 1645, Madame de Rambouillet here entertained an inner circle of friends whose hope it was to leaven the lump of French indifference with the yeast of culture. The gathering met once a week. The proceedings were most peaceful and informal. Every one enjoyed himself. The only passport for admission was a desire for intellectual expansion. The *Salon bleu* was perhaps the only place in France in which the noble and the bourgeois met on equal terms and without embarrassment on either side. Here the great Condé and his surprising sister, Madame de Longueville saw and admired the yellow hair of Mademoiselle Paulet. Mademoiselle de Scudéry, plain and admirable lady, sat gathering material for her *Grand Cyrus*. Godeau, Bishop of Grasse, a good man whose greatest fault was a passion for versifying, devised compliments in honour of the daughter of the house. New books were read and discussed, and authors read aloud their own productions. On some days, debates were held on the nature of love or on the etiquette of love-making. Those persons who could command the finest metaphors and open the least commonplace discussions



received the warmest applause. Mannerly flirtations on scientific lines were encouraged. The throng moved at pleasure up and down the long rooms, while in a dark alcove sat the fair-haired lady of the house. She was a great power in the land for good. Her guests were often affected and sometimes ridiculous in the things they said, but the encouragement their praise provided for men of letters benefited the great as well as the second-rate, and Corneille himself owed something to the great lady in her alcove. Young Bossuet preached his first sermon standing on a stool in her drawing-room, and many plays, since famous, were acted by and before members of the *côterie*. Other plays, now forgotten, were hopefully read aloud at Rambouillet by budding dramatists. Even Madame de Rambouillet's five-year-old granddaughter proposed to write "une pièce de théâtre." "Mais, ma grand' maman, il faut que Corneille y jette un peu les yeux avant que nous la jouions." Politics were seldom discussed in this abode of the Muses, although the same young person is reported to have remarked on or about her fifth birthday: "Now that I'm five, let us talk a little about the affairs of State."

Madame de Rambouillet was the first person to have a weekly At Home. Others soon imitated her example, and it was their efforts to follow suit which gave birth to the school of *Précieux* properly so called. Of these Mademoiselle de Scudéry was the first and the best. At her little house respectable citizens' wives and minor poets met to discuss the latest epigram. But their fine phrases, if a little inflated and bombastic, were dictated by good intention. These meetings raised the standard of manners and diction in the quarter, and the hostess, at least, was able to distinguish between genuine self-culture and conceited affectation. It is thus that she writes of a *précieuse* who lived for herself and not for the cause. "She could not bring herself to speak to people who were evidently ignorant. There were always fifteen or twenty books on her table, and she was always discovered holding one of them when visitors arrived. Still



I am sure one might affirm with truth that there were many more books in the room than she had ever read. [She] only used long words, which she enunciated with majestic emphasis, although what she said was always trivial. Further, . . . believing learning to be incompatible with the care of a family, she entirely ignored her domestic duties. Not only did she perpetually talk like a book, but she also talked continually about books, and was as ready to quote the most obscure author in an ordinary conversation as if she were lecturing at some celebrated university."

The appearance of this type of affectation marked a new era in the movement. Madame de Rambouillet only aimed at introducing better feeling, finer manners and correcter French into the routine of life. Her best imitators maintained the same ideal, although they fell into the error of mistaking quibbling for refinement. At this point it was that "culture" began to hew out for itself a fresh pathway. Not content with aiming at distinction of manner and diction, women aspired to sciences hitherto out of their reach. A few of them became really learned. The majority simply dabbled in Greek, Latin and astronomy, thus drawing down upon all learned women the ridicule which only one section of them deserved. Molière's *Femmes savantes* belonged to the silly company who were ready to embrace a scholar "pour l'amour du grec," and who let their households go to rack and ruin while they stood star-gazing on the roof.

In the capital the growing mania for being cultured showed itself absurd enough. In the country, matters were far worse. Molière's *Précieuses ridicules* were country girls without a vestige of education and no accomplishments: vain, silly and ambitious. It is a fact that an accomplished *précieuse* would exclaim: "Inutile, ostez le superflu de l'ardent," when she meant "James, snuff the candle," and "Approchez les commodités de la conversation" when she desired arm-chairs to be pushed up. The use of slang words, such as *furieusement*, meaning "very much," soon spread to

other ranks of society. *Cramoisi* and *rouge* were used by affected persons to mean *proud*:

“J’ose chanter un prince cramoisi  
Prince superbe. . . .”

(Quoted by M. FOURNIER)

Any dictionary of *précieux* phraseology will show to what depths the innovators had sunk. After the middle of the century the ideals of the Hôtel de Rambouillet were forgotten. Insincerity in art and life thrived in the sun of royal greatness. For a short period the language remained great and dignified, but with the dying century it, too, began to show signs of decrepitude, except in the writings of really great men. The bombast of the eighteenth century had its roots in the seventeenth. Trifling with literature now became a confirmed habit with the upper classes. In the golden days of Rambouillet influence, only persons who were really talented or who thought themselves so, attempted versification. Minor poets, such as Voiture, who composed with ease, Chapelain who had at least industry, and Racan, a graceful writer, undoubtedly contributed something to the progress of literary art. They familiarised their circle with the technique of poetry and furnished an indiscriminating society with the weapons of criticism. Partly by their means the age was qualified to appreciate the excellence of its great artists. But the death of the older generation perverted the new tendency. Every one who could talk now believed himself able to write. At the dawn of the eighteenth century it was thought positively ill-bred to deny oneself to be a poet. The curious stigma attached to professional work still deterred fine gentlemen from publishing their books—at any rate under their own names—and ladies guilty of novel-writing usually requested some semi-professional writer to masquerade as the author of their works. Segrais was, for instance, the obliging friend whom Madame de la Fayette selected to be the reputed author of *La Princesse de Clèves*.

Of the great literature of the century it is not here the place to speak. It belongs "to all time," and has small connection with the actual social life of the period. The cabals formed against Racine saddened his life, it is true, but the gods cannot die, and his *Phèdre* weathered the storm unshaken. Minor literature blossomed and faded, but the masterpieces of great men, scorned by fops and pedants, remain fresh to this day. Poussin, heckled and bewildered by French critics, has now taken his place in the forefront of European art. Molière, once slighted by fastidious noblemen, might now behold his name on title-pages cheek by jowl with that of Shakespeare.

## CHAPTER X

### THE RELIGION OF THE ORTHODOX

**I**N gazing at the kaleidoscope picture which is the seventeenth century, one is struck by the prevalence in it of the purple patches that represent transactions with the unseen. Religious ceremonies accompanied man from the moment of his birth until long after his body had returned to corruption. Prayer followed his soul beyond that point in order that it might plead for him persistently till Domesday. No department of life was without its particular and conventional modes of access to God. No person having a sense of propriety imagined that the cloak of ceremonial enveloping society was undesirable in that it concealed a multitude of sins. The really abandoned—those who had given themselves over to licence and the devil, alone escaped from under it. But then society was shocked at them and cast them out from its pale. Thus all who wished to avoid the stigma of eccentricity were careful to hedge themselves about with a bulwark of religious routine. Those who valued their comfort and their skins were orthodox from fear of persecution. Those who hoped for advancement followed the influential majority. All, for one motive or another, gave the outward shows of religion a large place in their lives. It was to the mutual advantage of Church and State to support each other. Their union was largely a political one, and the persecution meted out to heretics was really due to the political acumen of statesmen rather than to the proselytising fervour of the faithful. It was therefore to the interest of every one at the beginning of the century to be an orthodox Christian. Henri's stroke of genius in becoming a Catholic incidentally revealed the real character of contemporary piety. While it was uncertain which persuasion



would triumph, quite half the nation was Huguenot. Some of the innovators had left the Church because they felt themselves being asphyxiated in the stuffy atmosphere of a religion which had become almost purely one of routine. Others sought liberty that it might become a cloak of maliciousness, "Some," says Régnier de la Planche, "approved of the new doctrine directly they heard it spoken of and without further examining it, being content to know that they must not attend Mass, that they may eat meat in Lent, that they are not bound to go to confession, and that they may speak ill of priests." It was, as will be seen, chiefly sloth that dictated this attitude. But directly it became evident that the contest between the adherents of Mass and Bible would tear France to pieces, all enlightened men began to work for compromise. This being impossible of achievement, it was felt that one side must at all costs be allowed to triumph. That the victor would be the historic religion of France was of course a foregone conclusion. The general stampede which now took place from the camp of heresy to the garrison of orthodoxy hardly allowed time for preliminary conviction or even rudimentary instruction. Converts found themselves discharging religious duties without exactly understanding what they were doing. The story told by the convert d'Aubigné well illustrates this tendency, although the incident occurred at an earlier period than that here described. "On Easter Tuesday, while my master was playing tennis with the princes of Lorraine, Henri III. asked me if I had made my Easter Communion. I was greatly confused and replied 'What a question, Sire!' 'Where and on what day did you make it?' continued the King. 'Last Friday,' said I, not knowing that there is only that one sorry day in all the year on which no Mass is said and one cannot communicate. My answer gave occasion to M. de Guise to say to me out loud: 'I'faith, d'Aubigné, you can hardly be said to know your Catechism.' This drew a laugh from all the party, except from the Queen-Mother, who caused me to be closely watched."

Among the faithful themselves a certain degree of uncertainty prevailed. The Gallican Church had emerged victoriously from the dark days of the religious wars, and the sufferings it had undergone had given it new energy. Contact with heresy had extended the boundaries of its mental horizon. For although the hierarchical institutions were consolidated, it had unconsciously absorbed into its own system the more essential traits of Protestantism. The heretics had accused the Catholics of honouring God with their lips while their heart was far from Him. But with the new century a new interpretation was given to the term *Christian obligation*, and it became as much a Catholic as a Protestant duty to "wrestle in prayer," and to base the hope of salvation on faith in Jesus. Personal devotion now became an essential in the life of a Churchman. Saints, such as François de Sales, owed much that was excellent in their philosophy of God to thoughts suggested by men consigned by orthodoxy to everlasting flames. Saint-François was a notorious offender in the matter of seeing good in heretics, and on his death over sixty books anathematised by the Church were found in his library.

But besides the influences resulting from this more filial attitude towards God, there were two others that contributed much to determine the nature of French piety during the seventeenth century. The first of these was the wave of mysticism that swept over the Pyrenees, and had the tradition of Saint Theresa for its foundation. The second was a belief that only by a real severity towards himself might a man buy back his soul from the hand of Satan. Reformers, such as Charles Borromeo and Philip de' Neri, who originated this view in Italy, had a great following among the devout in France.

These currents of thought, though usually merged in the general stream of seventeenth-century religion, may nevertheless be here and there differentiated. Evangelical charity and the simplicity of the early Church find their expression in the lives of those who laboured among the poor under the

guidance of Saint Vincent de Paul, or those whom Saint François taught to live "holy, meek, and just" in the great world of society. Mysticism, resulting from a passive acceptance of the will of God and a careful cultivation and study of certain psychological states, showed itself in Madame Guyon and the Quietist school. A recognition of the value of rule and precept appears in the impulse to found new orders and to reform old ones. Religion, in short, became more than ever a matter of importance.

But with more severe demands on the part of the Church, and increased efforts to meet them on the part of the faithful, the gulf between the really devout and the nominally so became more unmistakable. A person who frequented the sacraments and avoided occasions of sin was at once labelled *dévot* by those who merely attended Mass and went to assemblies in low-necked dresses. Some great ladies, hoping to belong to both camps, gambled and sang litanies with equal fervour. But by far the larger number of persons in society behaved like Madame de Montespan, who thought that as long as she followed the general precepts of the Church with regard to ceremonial obligation, her private life might remain as she pleased. The prevalence of this view naturally put the clergy in a difficult position, especially when the exponents of it were persons of high standing. Louis XIV. only missed hearing Mass once in his life, but this fact did not prevent his spiritual advisers' task from being an embarrassing one. Bossuet too, having vainly tried to procure the dismissal of the King's mistress, was in the end obliged to say that he thought it possible for her to lead a Christian life at Court. The career of prelate and priest in the King's train craved wary walking. The Church was in a certain measure captive, but that her captivity was a splendid one could not be doubted by those who knew at what price her allegiance was bought. About a fourth of the soil of France was hers. No sooner had peace been restored by Henri IV. than the Church began to strengthen her hand against fresh attack by the foundation of seminaries

and abbeys. In this task she was aided by munificent bequests, especially from royal personages. Houses for Oratorians, Augustinians, Barnabites, Jesuits, Feuillantines, *Filles de Saint-Joseph*, etc., were built and endowed. In 1615 Madame de Chantal instituted the *Filles de la Visitation*, with which community Saint François was chiefly connected. The greater abbeys of earlier foundation became more than ever the *rendez-vous* of social lights when a penitential season or mood drove them into retreat. Kings' daughters were among their abbesses, and in every great family there was at least one girl to whom the rulership of such a house had been assured by purchase or by royal favour. Henriette de Lorraine d'Elbœuf was Abbess of Notre-Dame de Soissons; Montmartre was ruled by Françoise de Lorraine de Guise; Jouaire by a member of the House of Lorraine de Chevreuse, and Fontevault by Jeanne-Baptiste de Bourbon, daughter of Henri IV. The head of this abbey was by position a princess of the Church, with rights and privileges somewhat resembling those of a prince-bishop. As the century advanced, the rigour of the earlier rule relaxed, and by 1670, when the sister of Madame de Montespan became abbess, the nuns lapsed into a comfortable life of learned leisure or of idleness. The abbess herself was occupied in making a translation of Plato, and in keeping up intercourse on literary matters with Madame de la Fayette, Boileau, and Racine. Her admirable beauty, as well as the Mortemart wit which she shared with her sisters, earned for her the position of a leader of society.

That this free intercourse with the world was not thought incompatible with the duties of a nun is not remarkable. The religious life was almost the only alternative to marriage possible for a woman. The girl who did not wish to marry or whose parents were too poor to dower more than one daughter, was as surely relegated to a convent as the really pious girl, who felt that her vocation lay there. Madame de Gonzague states that she disliked her sister, Marie, because she and a third sister named Benedicte were always told that



they must become nuns so that Marie might have a larger dowry. Many women were therefore to be found in the cloister who were entirely unsuited to it. As their gay young brothers were hustled into rich benefices to line the family purse, so girls were made abbesses for the same purpose, or, more often, alas! in order to get rid of them. The most popular order was that of the Carmelites. Its chief Parisian house was in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, and there the life was dignified and the nuns really devout. But in the provinces there were religious houses in which corruption had so far spread that their existence became a mockery of the purpose for which they were founded. At Port-Royal (before it was reformed) dances were held in the abbess's parlour. At Perpignan there were nuns who painted their faces, and openly tolerated the addresses of admirers. Arnauld tells us that he saw a woman who was a nun "but who hardly wore the dress of one, for she had on her head a fashionable cap and wore a very short and transparent little wimple. She would have been greatly displeased if this wimple had hidden her neck, which was very white and finely shaped." (This lady ended by returning to the world and marrying.) The practice of receiving boarders had helped to lower the standard of life in these institutions. Persons who had lived tempestuous lives in the world retired when overtaken by remorse to end their days in some comfortable convent. The son of Pontchartrain once asked a friend, who had buried himself in a cloister, what he did the livelong day. "What I do?" replied the other. "Well, I am simply bored. That is the form my penance has taken, for in the past I amused myself too much."

That the clergy as a whole were no better than their secular neighbours is evident from the number of satires, pastoral letters and personal criticisms relative to their behaviour which have come down to us. The dandy abbé who wrote madrigals and took a pride in the smallness of his feet, was a particular butt for satire as well as an object of perfunctory episcopal reproof. Saint François speaks

of some whose hair "caused scandal." In 1649 Mazarin, himself fond of ease and fine linen, threatened with the Divine anger all abbés with "curled and powdered hair, and a face covered with patches." Conversation among the clergy at a service was only too common. Priests sitting in the choir-stalls greeted their friends in the congregation; some read, some slept, few really prayed. Such conduct ended by disgusting the faithful. Madame de Sévigné, writing to her daughter on 19th January 1674, tells her how "touchy" the bishops were on this matter. "Yesterday at Mass His Majesty with a smiling face handed his almoner one of the printed sheets which an unknown person has scattered at Saint-Germain. In it the nobility begs the King to reform the immodesty of his clergy, who converse and speak out loud and turn their backs on the altar before he arrives, and to command them at least to behave as well in the chapel when only God is there as when the King is present. This petition is very well worded. The prelates are furious, especially a few who used that interval of waiting to shout at the musicians, to the great scandal of the Gallican Church."

Such behaviour is not to be wondered at in persons whose only ambition in electing an ecclesiastical career was a pecuniary one. That there were bishops worthy of their vocation will be seen later on; but it cannot be denied that many prelates differed in no way from the worst of their lay relatives. Their pretensions and their claim to play the little sovereign in their diocese were notorious. Many great lords who happened to be bishops never set foot in their diocese at all. Some made a kind of royal progress through it at long intervals. Confirmation was administered with the greatest irregularity. Preaching was left almost entirely to the minor clergy. When a bishop did preach, it was felt to be a species of condescension on his part. One such orator was wont to address his humbler congregations as "*canaille Chrétienne*" (Christian rabble).

Practically no care was exercised in the distribution of benefices, and a bishopric was not thought too high a price

to pay for even an indifferent pun. Godeau, otherwise a worthy man, is said to have thus petitioned Richelieu for the vacant See of Grasse: "Monseigneur, je vous demande grâce." Another ecclesiastic asked for Périgueux in these words: "Sire, je suis né gueux, j'ai vécu gueux; mais s'il plait à votre majesté je veux périr gueux." Also when the abuse had grown too flagrant and the King was moved to work a reform, the indignation aroused thereby among high and mighty personages was very great. At one period the distribution of benefices was entrusted to Saint Vincent de Paul. He set his face at once against the custom of bestowing benefices on children or frivolous young men of good family, and made it his aim to appoint none but devout and well-qualified men. Such a programme seemed monstrous to persons who had been in the habit of regarding the Church as a comfortable heritage for their incompetent younger sons. One Duchess came in person to demand a bishopric for her son, who was still in the nursery. Vincent courteously replied that it was impossible for him to oblige her. The great lady at once lost her temper and seizing her heavy wooden footstool hurled it at the priest's head. His only remark as he wiped the blood from his face was: "It is wonderful to what lengths a mother's love for her child can go!"

Among the army of unsuitable persons thus summarily thrust into the ranks of the clergy, Jean-François-Paul de Gondi, second Cardinal de Retz was perhaps the most typical, as he was certainly the ablest and the most interesting. Retz belongs to the category of engaging scoundrels. He had no principles, whatever his admirer d'Andilly may have thought. No one possessed a more surprising talent for extricating himself from unpleasant situations with an air of frank unconcern. He was perfidious, but acknowledged his lack of principle in the most explicit terms: a fine gentleman, courageous withal, and one whose sense of humour enabled him to enjoy every day as it came. His tongue was biting and spared no one; but all his sallies had a certain distinc-

tion, and he never showed resentment when people retaliated by uttering unpleasant truths about *him*. For instance: "Madame de Carignan said one day before the Queen that I was remarkably ugly, and that was, perhaps, the one occasion in her life when she managed not to tell a lie."

His intrigues are a matter of history, and that he plotted with the Soissons family against Richelieu seems only too certain. The position of Coadjutor-Bishop of Paris (achieved by him in 1643), furnished him with a wide sphere of action. His one aim was to collect a party. Even preaching was used by Retz as a means of winning partisans. When accused of conspiring during the Fronde, Retz, who spent most of his nights in intrigue, employed much of the day in preaching sermons. "I preached," says he, "on Christmas Day at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. I dilated on Christian charity, without saying a word about present affairs. The women shed tears at the gross injustice of persecuting a bishop who only felt love for his enemies, and I gathered from the blessings poured on me as I left the pulpit that I had not been wrong in believing that this sermon would have a very desirable effect."

Retz further tried to strengthen his hand by dabbling in Jansenism. His association with the beautiful Mademoiselle de Chevreuse was also used by him as a political tool. His opinion of this lady is thus frankly expressed in his *Mémoires*. "She was only witty for him she loved; but she never loved any one long, and therefore no one was ever long of opinion that she was witty. She fell into rages with her lovers as with her clothes. Other women grow weary of the latter, but she burnt them, and her maids had all the trouble in the world to save a skirt, a cap, a pair of gloves, or a piece of Venetian lace. I believe that if she had been able to throw her lovers into the fire when she was tired of them she would have done so with the greatest pleasure in life."

Retz appears to have had no affections, scruples, or fears. Nothing disconcerted him; nothing really made him feel dull. Even in the prison to which his intrigues brought him,



and from which his ingenuity rescued him, Retz found matter for amusement. His gaoler was in the habit of stealing his firewood, so that he spent a fortnight at Christmas in a room "as big as a church" without being able to warm himself. The gaoler also stole his linen, his clothes and his shoes, so that he was sometimes obliged to spend whole weeks in bed because he had nothing to put on. In this situation he amused himself with writing a life of the above gaoler, "who was as much a rascal as Lazarillo de Tormes or Buscon." He was determined not to "die of grief," nor to show his tormentor that he even observed the little insults offered him. One piece of information that the gaoler delighted to impart, again and again, was that he had just planted some asparagus for Retz's use. (Asparagus is only fit to eat at least three years after it is planted.)

Prison penury must have been hard to bear for a man who was used to spend 800 écus a day and to see seven tables spread in his great hall. But Retz was greedy of experience, and no adventure came amiss to him. With regard to his physical courage, the following delightful story may be quoted. The cause of alarm in it was a ridiculous one; but Retz's conduct, nevertheless, testifies to a high degree of self-control, for it must be remembered that during a period dominated by fear of the supernatural, Satan incarnate was far more dreadful to the imagination than a hundred murderers would have been.

There had been a party at Saint-Cloud, and among the guests were the Cardinal, the poet Voiture, the Bishop of Lizieux, the great Turenne, Madame de Choisy, and Mademoiselle de Vendôme with her mother and her lover, M. de Brion. All these persons proposed to return in the same coach. Having enumerated the company, Retz thus continues: "Well, we had enjoyed ourselves so much that the first streaks of dawn had begun to appear as we reached the bottom of Bons-hommes hill. Just at the foot of it the coach came to a sudden standstill. As I was at one of the doors . . . I asked the coachman why he had stopped, and he

answered in a voice trembling with amazement: 'Do you wish me to drive straight over all those devils in front of me?' I put my head out of the window, but as I always have been short-sighted I could distinguish nothing. Madame de Choisy, who was at the other door . . . was the first person in the coach to perceive the cause of the coachman's terror. I say 'in the coach,' for five or six footmen behind were crying out, 'Jesu, Mary,' and already shaking with fright. The screams of Madame de Choisy caused M. de Turenne to throw himself out of the coach. I thought that thieves were upon us, and immediately jumped out too. I took a sword from one of the footmen, drew it and went to join M. de Turenne on the other side. I found him staring fixedly at something I could not see. I asked him what he was looking at, and he answered in a whisper, giving me at the same time a slight nudge in the arm: 'I will tell you, but we must not frighten the ladies' (who, in truth, were howling rather than screaming). Voiture began an *oremus*. You are perhaps acquainted with the piercing shrieks of Madame de Choisy. Mademoiselle de Vendôme was telling her beads; Madame de Vendôme wanted to confess her sins to M. de Lisieux, who never desisted from repeating to her: 'My daughter, do not be frightened; you are in God's hand.' The Comte de Brion was on his knees and had very devoutly struck up the Litanies of the Virgin, in which all the footmen joined. All these things happened in less than no time, as you may imagine. M. de Turenne, who wore a dress sword, had drawn it as I had mine. Then he turned to me with the air he has when ordering up dinner or giving battle, and said these words: 'Let us go and look at those people.' 'What people?' I asked. And, indeed, I was beginning to think that all of them were out of their senses. He replied, 'I think, in truth, that they may very likely be devils.' As we had already taken five or six steps in the direction of La Savonnerie, I began to perceive something that looked like a procession of black spectres. The sight moved me more than it had M. de Turenne. Also, on reflecting that I had

long been on the lookout for ghosts, and that here I had apparently lighted upon some, I gave a far more violent start than that which his manners permitted him. I made two or three bounds towards the procession. The people in the coach, thinking that we had come to hands with all the armies of Satan, uttered a great cry. Yet it was not they who were the most frightened. Some poor barefooted monks of the Reformed Augustinian Order were the demons of our imagination, and seeing two men advance towards them, sword in hand, they fell into a great panic. One of them, separating himself from the rest, called out to us: 'Sirs, we are poor monks who are doing no harm to any one, and who are going to refresh ourselves a little in the river for our health.' We returned to the coach, M. de Turenne and I, shouting with laughter, as you may imagine. Brion was much ridiculed."

Nothing short of Retz's own *Mémoires* can give a right impression of his personality. They are more exciting than any novel of adventure, and of more psychological interest than the best handbook on that modern science. To enjoy them is to enjoy the genius of the seventeenth century.

If we turn from sporting statesmen, such as Retz, to the solid phalanx of really virtuous bishops, we shall find that they were at least as numerous, if more obscure, since goodness is ever wont to hide its head. There were many prelates who worked in voluntary exile in their diocese, teaching, preaching, and overseeing their clergy. They lived frugally, but with due dignity and quiet cheerfulness.

The most gracious of all was perhaps the Cardinal de Coislin, Bishop of Orleans. Various traits in his character make it difficult not to believe that Victor Hugo had him in mind when he drew the charming portrait of Monseigneur Bien-venu in *Les Misérables*. His broad-mindedness in dealing with heretics was especially conspicuous in an age when men thought that to punish other men's bodies was to save their souls. "After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, when they put it into the King's head to convert

the Huguenots by means of dragoons and tribulations, a regiment of these soldiers was sent to patrol the whole diocese. As soon as they arrived, M. d'Orléans had all the horses put into his stables. He also sent for the officers and said he did not wish them to eat at any table but his own. He then prayed them to allow no soldier to leave the town, nor to cause the least disturbance, and that if they were short of money he would provide them with some. But, above all, he charged them not to speak one word to the Huguenots, nor to quarter themselves upon a single one of them. He meant to be obeyed, and he *was* obeyed. The stay lasted a month, and cost him a great deal, and at the end of that period he managed so that the regiment was recalled from his diocese and that no other was sent thither. This charitable conduct, so different from that of every other diocesan in the neighbourhood, won over nearly as many Huguenots as did the barbarities they suffered elsewhere. Those who were converted, were converted from choice and in good faith, not from compulsion or hope of gain. They were first carefully instructed; nothing was done in a hurry, and none of them returned to their former errors. Besides exercising charity, incurring expense, and gaining influence over the soldiers [the bishop] showed courage in silently blaming by his conduct the system of which the King so greatly approved. The blessing that resulted therefrom was so marked that it prevented the very existence of ill-will, and worse, which such conduct might naturally be expected to provoke."

The following story has peculiar charm.

"Besides the public alms which regularly consumed all the revenues of the diocese, M. d'Orléans distributed many presents, about which a profound secrecy was maintained. Among these was a pension of 400 francs, which he gave to a broken-down gentleman who nearly always dined at his table when the bishop was at Orleans. One morning the servants found that two heavy pieces of plate had disappeared from the bishop's room, and one of them had noticed the



pensioner loitering near them for a considerable time. They told their suspicions to their master, who would not believe the story until he was tempted to do so by the fact that the gentleman did not appear again. When a few days had elapsed, the bishop sent for him, and in a private interview made him confess that he was the thief. Then M. d'Orléans said to him that he must have been strangely in need of money to do a thing like that, and that he, the bishop, had great cause to complain of his lack of confidence in not revealing his need to him. He pulled twenty louis out of his pocket, and giving them to the gentleman begged him to come and dine with him as usual ; above all to forget, as he did, an action which he must never repeat. The servants were forbidden to speak of their suspicions, and this episode would never have been known had it not been for the revelations of the gentleman himself, overwhelmed as he was with confusion and gratitude."

Many stories have come down to us, illustrating the ridiculous arrogance of great lords who were also bishops. It is therefore fortunate that the Church in the seventeenth century can boast of a few great champions, drawn from the same ranks of society, and as remarkable for their sufficiency as the others were for their lack of the evangelical virtues. Among these François de Sales, Prince-Bishop of Geneva, is probably the most familiar to us to-day. He owes this notoriety to the accident of canonisation and to the fact that his particular type of goodness has an especial power of appeal to the modern mind. The penances of Santa Fina, as depicted by the delightful Gozzoli, or the austerities of our own Thomas Cantelupe leave us cold if not a little sceptical ; but the wholesome common sense of the French Saint Francis can touch the intelligence of a liberal age, even if his explicit sentiment and perfumed metaphors seem to run atilt against our "British phlegm." A man who could catalogue annoyances such as the loss of a glove or the bad cooking of some dish among the incidents of life that call for Christian fortitude, might well awaken surprise in the admirers of Bossuet's

majestic generalities. By thus publicly espousing the cause of domestic trials, Saint François gave heavy emphasis to the truth that it is in dealing with them and not with the great events of life that goodness chiefly manifests itself. The arrival of an unexpected visitor when dinner is being served and there is only just enough food to go round as it is : "that headache, that pain in your tooth, that cold, that contrariness of your wife or husband ; the breaking of a glass, a slight or a scornful look, the loss of some gloves, of a ring, of a handkerchief, the slight effort of going to bed or getting up a little earlier to say one's prayers"—the bearing of these things is in his opinion as much a school for saints as martyrdom itself.

Saint François thought it very unwise to step out of one's sphere in life or to refuse to conform to the customs of a society into which one is born. Other priests encouraged, or rather did not hold back, the people who gave up dancing, wearing fashionable clothes and other practices, harmless in themselves, on the plea that temptation lurked in the sound of music or the folds of satin. Saint François explicitly states that in certain cases charity actually demands compliance with such practices. The mistress of a great house owes a certain display to her rank. She must be cheerful and obliging at all times, and if the company desires to play cards it would be churlish to refuse. But all is to be done in moderation, and for "recreation, not from taste."

The real value of Saint François's work lies in the larger liberty that by his means became the heritage of all good men. He showed that sinfulness and its attendant hang-dog sense of guilt was not the normal state of man. No one more greatly deplored the prevalence and the atrocity of wickedness that was not ashamed to show its face ; but his contention was that God gives man grace sufficient to emancipate him from the power of evil ; and that therefore a man who does his best to lead an ordered life has every reason to be happy and every encouragement to enjoy all that life offers him of wholesome pleasures. Saint François's

life was an object-lesson in the practice of these principles. There was nothing in his behaviour that could tend to alienate his own class, and the same lack of the professional manner was characteristic of the persons he chiefly influenced.

Of these Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot, Baronne de Chantal, and grandmother of Madame de Sévigné, was the chief. The death of her husband through an accident left her a disconsolate widow, given to good works but without any special object in life. At the age of thirty-two she chanced to attend a course of Lenten sermons preached by Saint François at Dijon. She put herself at once under his direction, and in 1615 she became the head and foundress of a new order, the *Filles de la Visitation*.

Men such as Saint François exercised a strong influence locally. It was, however, left to certain religious orders to sway the general body of public opinion. Of these the Jesuits were the most prominent. The reign of Henri IV. saw them under a cloud. A prejudice still existed against them, and it was not until the reign of Louis XIII. that their ascendancy over French society began. The ignorance and lack of breeding displayed by many of the clergy began to disgust a society whose pretensions to culture became every day more exorbitant. What men wanted was a religion which would enable them to live their ordinary lives in a more or less comfortable sense of security. France recoiled from austerity, and threatened to slip the leash of discipline altogether, unless religion consented to be "reasonable," and meet the candidate for Heaven half-way. This compromise was one which the Jesuits entirely saw their way to facilitating. They understood the art of making allowances; they dwelt on the mercy of God rather than on the deserts of the wicked. Moreover, their erudition was great, and their system of education excellent. Men were charmed to find that the Church was not obliged, by her very nature, to discountenance profane learning. Quotations from Juvenal and Seneca were the adornment of many Jesuit sermons. Fine and courteous manners characterised most Jesuit priests. Their credit



spread enormously. The King's confessor was invariably a member of the society, and all persons with any pretensions to fashion, resorted to them. The worst aspect of their methods is brought to light by the aid of a terrible irony in Pascal's *Lettres provinciales*, and with less skill in the popular literature of the period. "By pretending to convert men's souls," cries one critic, "they catch a large number of fools." Nevertheless, a study of the lives of certain Jesuits is sufficient to counteract the effects of such writings. Père de la Chaize, for so many years the friend of Louis XIV., was personally as much averse to intrigue as was Saint Vincent de Paul. When he found himself in equivocal situations, it was his society who had pushed him into them. An intriguer would have sought the favour of Madame de Maintenon, but La Chaize, although naturally at one with her on the subject of heresy, did not feign any personal sympathy with the Marquise. He was only too glad to aid her in building up an influence which might help the King to enter upon a new path, but he set himself against her pretensions (if indeed they existed) to be openly acknowledged as the wife of Louis XIV. Her rather early Victorian parade of virtue as a profession, as well as her conventionality, jarred upon his very complicated temperament. He died in the dreadful winter of 1709, leaving a large gap in the small circle of the King's sincere well-wishers. His successor was another Jesuit, named Le Tellier. His countenance was such, remarks Saint-Simon, that "one would tremble to meet him on the outskirts of a wood."

Of Jesuit oratory it will be necessary to say a few words later. It was by this means that they chiefly maintained their influence, for then, as now, the intellectual exercise of listening to a good address was highly agreeable to many persons. The general conclusion of the century, with regard to the Jesuits as well as to the Oratorians, their rivals, was very neatly expressed by the *Premier Président* Harlay. This statesman was once visited by some Jesuits and Oratorians at the same time. As he was seeing them off



he said with a pleasant smile to the former : " How good a thing it is to live with you, my fathers : " then turning to the Oratorians he continued, " and to die with you, my fathers. " So thought his contemporaries. The Jesuits set a man's conscience at rest while he was well and prosperous, but he who was summoned to more serious things by the hand of death craved the plain speaking and the wholesome if bitter consolations of Bérulle's mission priests.

The clergy who had no particular claim to distinction differed as much as their fathers in God, the good and bad prelates. Some parish priests, like Olier of Saint-Sulpice, devoted their substance and energies to work among the poor. Their zeal was often greater than their common-sense. M. Roy, curé of Persé in 1702, used to hire the village fiddler's violin at a high price, so that it could not be used at feasts. Others merely regarded their profession as a means of livelihood, and sold their services at a fixed rate.

Some members of the hierarchy confined themselves to being lazy. Perhaps also they had never enjoyed the advantage of having their duties clearly put before them. The Abbé de Pompadour was so far from grasping the very meaning of prayer that he considered recital of the breviary to be a purely objective necessity. He confessed himself responsible for its recital at stated intervals : but whether he or another man did it, seemed to him a question of the smallest importance. " He had a servant almost as old as himself, to whom he gave, in addition to his wages, so much a day to say his office in his stead. And this servant was consequently seer mumbling it in a corner of the ante-rooms in the house frequented by his master. "

At Court, as has already been observed, religion was more or less a matter of ceremonial. In vain did preacher declaim against the belief that if a man conveys his body to church no enquiries should be made as to the whereabouts of his thoughts. They were equally unsuccessful in inducing the great to forget their trifling quarrels in the House of God.

All, for instance, flocked to hear Père Seraphin preach a course of Lenten sermons at Versailles in 1696. This priest feared neither King nor Court, called a spade very distinctly a spade, and set forth the pleasant vices of his hearers with startling vividness. From this course M. de Vendôme of the blood-royal and the Duc de la Rochefoucauld alone absented themselves. The King complained, and Vendôme replied that he could not go to hear a man preach who said exactly what he liked and whom no one might contradict. Le Rochefoucauld had an even more inadequate reason. It was that he could not so far debase himself as to go to a crowded church and wait for a place to be found for him. The King at once granted him the fourth place after his own, forgetting that the Bishop of Orleans was in the habit of sitting there. This being the case, the first time the Duke appeared, a quarrel ensued between him and the bishop. The Court split into two camps, and both claimants for the seat enjoyed a large following. But as the Duke had the King's support, it was he who proved victorious. The bishop, unable to face the humiliation of defeat, retired to "sulk in his diocese."

"The prince's religion is the religion of all respectable men," said Malherbe. "A *dévot* is a man who under an atheist king would also be an atheist," added La Bruyère.

These piercing observations were only too true in the latter days of Louis XIV. On the King's "conversion," many persons hastened to become devout too. Courtiers armed with novels bound like prayer-books flocked to church to curry royal favour. Ladies sat in the King's chapel with lighted tapers before them, ostensibly to enable them to read, but in reality so that they might be recognised. Brissac, the captain of the King's guard, who hated these hypocrisies, once played a clever trick upon the ladies of the Court. The chapel was full, and the guards were lined up to receive the King. The captain suddenly stepped forward and ordered the guards to retire, as the King was not coming

that evening. All the ladies, except two, at once left the Church. As soon as they were gone Brissac told his soldiers that he was only unmasking the hypocrisy of the Court, and the guard returned to receive the King. The latter was astonished to see the chapel empty, and laughed much at Brissac's stratagem.

Religion, then, even when not purely hypocritical, was a matter in which personal comfort was largely considered. People preferred, in the words of Saint François, "to pray in orange flower water and to be virtuous by dint of eating sugar." To be charitable was a hard thing: to hear Mass daily was far easier, besides being more fashionable. Mazarin was wont to reproach his nieces for not being sufficiently religious, and not hearing Mass daily. "If you do not hear it for God," (he wrote) "hear it at least for the world."

But most information respecting the women who haunted churches may be obtained from the skits and satires of scornful observers who happened to have a turn for writing verse or mordant poems. "It is not always a 'Pardon' which sets women journeying: it is the craving to gad about," wrote Gui Patin from his seclusion. The *Pasquil de la Cour pour apprendre à discourir* contains a detailed recipe for being a *dévôte*:—

"Il faut donc ques, en premier lieu  
Apprendre à bien parler de Dieu ;  
Et bien que l'on n'y sçache notte  
Si faut-il faire la devoste,  
Porter le cordon Saint François  
Communier à chasque mois,  
Aller à vespre à l'Oratoire,  
Sçavoir où sont les stations  
Que c'est que méditation,  
Visiter l'Ordre Sainte-Ursule  
Cognoistre le Père Bérulle  
Luy parler de dévotion,  
Des sœurs de l'Incarnation,  
Participer à son extase  
Aller voir le père Athanase

La marquise de Menelé,  
 Jeusner en temps de jubilé  
 Savoir où sont les quarante heures  
 Ne veoir aucun sans controller  
 Ses mœurs, sa façon de parler,  
 Se reserver pour sa conduite  
 Père Chaillon, un Jésuite ;  
 Aller conférer avec eux  
 Chasque journée une heure ou deux  
 Avoir des tantes et cousines  
 Dans le couvent des Carmelines . . .  
 Parler des cas de consciences  
 Selon qu'on voit les occurrences."

Persons able to put into practice this miscellaneous advice were indeed believed to have reached the topmost rung of piety. If they had the courage to maintain a consistent severity of appearance their claim to sanctity was even surer. "La Bonnetot," says Madame de Sévigné in 1673, "has also taken to piety. She has removed her glass eye, and no longer rouges or curls her hair." The Princesse de Harcourt began by never wearing rouge at all. But even her devotion dwindled, and her appointment to the post of *dame du palais* won her entirely back to the world. Still she did not like to begin again to paint her face without some shadow of a pretext. She therefore told the Queen that she would put on rouge if her Majesty ordered it. The Queen replied that she would never compel her to do such a thing, and the princess was thus reduced to pinching her cheeks to make them red.

But slight as was the attention paid to the fundamental requirements of religion, the progress of the Church's year made a material difference in the lives of fashionable persons. The Lenten fast was very strictly observed at the beginning of the century by all classes. Towards the middle of the period the bourgeoisie and people became lax, whilst the Court, under the royal leadership, became stricter in the matter. In 1629 only six oxen and sixty calves were eaten in Paris during the fast. In 1665, 200 oxen and 2000 calves were killed, in



spite of the fact that it was the duty of the police to prevent the breaking of the Church's rule. The police regulation with regard to the eating of meat in prohibited seasons was as follows:—Any sick person requiring meat was obliged to produce a certificate, signed by the doctor and the curé, specifying his illness and the amount of meat necessary. No butcher was allowed to sell meat to unauthorised persons. The monopoly of selling meat during Lent really belonged to the Hospital called the Hôtel-Dieu; but certain butchers purchased for themselves the right to trade independently, by giving the hospital a yearly sum of 300 livres (later transmuted to a tribute of meat and twenty-four fowls a day—twelve to boil for dinner, and twelve larded to roast for supper).

The spread of an epidemic in Lent was of course hailed with joy by the butchers, because of the consequent increase of persons obliged to eat meat. M. Fournier says that a mile distant from Orleans there was a pretty house called "du rhume," built by a butcher with the proceeds of the sale of meat during an epidemic of influenza or some kindred malady.

Before his conversion the King had not kept Lent for about fourteen years. In 1683, however, Louis became very particular in the matter, and the Chief of Police was bidden to see that on Good Friday nothing was eaten but vegetables. The same ordinance forbade innkeepers to sell meat on days of abstinence on pain of a fine of 300 louis. Raids were to be made on the houses of suspects whatever their social position. The Parliament of Besançon even condemned a man to death who had eaten meat on an ordinary Friday.

In earlier life the King appears to have been as particular as he became after his lapse, for in 1658 he had a stand-up-fight with his brother about a plate of soup which the latter proposed to eat on a fast-day. The Duke of Orleans helped himself to "bouillie," and began to eat it at the King's table. Louis forbade him to go on. The Duke persisted until the King lost his temper and tried to snatch away the plate. A

struggle ensued, in the course of which most of the soup was freely poured over the hair of which Monsieur was so justly proud. The hall rang with the recriminations of the combatants, and the Court looked on in horror at the battle-royal.

But if certain soups were not allowed, eggs were tolerated, in spite of the fact that in earlier centuries they had been forbidden. Madame de Sévigné advises her daughter to drink coffee made with milk in Lent. Fish was, of course, the staple food. "I cannot pity you for having no butter in Provence," she writes, "since you had admirable oil and excellent fish." At her own home she ate bread and butter seasoned with herbs and violets, and "at night soup with a little butter . . . good prunes and good spinach. Indeed this cannot be called fasting, and we (may well) say with confusion, 'How difficult it is to serve Holy Church.'"

By the middle of the century the observances connected with religion had grown so numerous that it became impossible to be a good Catholic and at the same time a good man of business. Saints' days had multiplied and working days consequently decreased. The prosperity of Protestant countries as compared with that of Catholic ones was due to their greater facilities for cultivating land. Voltaire's letter on the subject is well known, although written at a far later date:—"It is my vocation to deride Rome and to make it subservient to my whims. I am therefore presenting a fine memorial to the Holy Father. I am asking for a real Bull all to myself, granting me leave to cultivate the soil on holy-days without being damned. My bishop is a fool who would not give the little *pays* of Gex the permission I crave, and the abominable habit of becoming intoxicated in honour of the saints, instead of ploughing, still persists in many a diocese. The King ought, I do not say to permit, but to command agricultural work on those days. It is a relic of our ancient barbarism that allows us to leave so great a part of the economy of the state in the hands of the clergy. M. de Courteilles has just done us signal service in bringing the council to order the marshes to be drained. It ought, in like manner, to order

the King's subjects to grow corn on the feast of Saint-Simon and Saint-Jude as much as on any other day. We are the butt and the laughing-stock of foreign nations by land and sea ; the peasants of the canton of Berne, who are my neighbours, make fun of me because I can only plough my field three times, whereas they plough theirs four times. I blush to address myself to a bishop of Rome, and not to a Minister of State when I am presenting requests for the good of the country."

The evils resulting from enforced idleness had begun to engage the attention of the authorities as early as 1666. Seventeen saints' days were then suppressed by Péréfixe, Metropolitan of Paris, at the King's suggestion. Among the saints so slighted were Saint Roch (whom the people demanded back), and strangely enough, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, and the Holy Innocents.

"Saint-Luc, fidèle evangeliste,  
Saint-Marc, faisant même metier  
Ne se verront plus sur la liste,"

wrote a wag of the day.

This curtailment of holy-days was of service in that it deprived the people of seventeen among a large number of opportunities of wasting money, as well as of standing idle at street corners watching the processions, which so frequently edified the inhabitants of the capital.

The absence of vital personal religion in so many cases was very largely due to ignorance and defective up-bringing. Baptism was often put off until it was forgotten altogether. The story of the Marquis de Lévy is a case in point. This nobleman was about to marry Mademoiselle de Chevreuse, but when the two families were assembled to sign the contract, neither the bridegroom nor his parents were able to remember his Christian name. (He had always been known by his title.) They could not even recollect whether he had been baptised. One of the company, however, remembered that his nurse was still living in Paris. The old woman was



fetches and revealed the fact that, while the Marquis was still a baby in arms, the family had gone on a journey which necessitated their spending a night at Auxerre. Colbert, the bishop of the diocese, was a personal friend of the parents, and remonstrated with them on subjecting so young a child to the perils of a long journey before he was baptised. They, on their part, refused to have the ceremony performed then and there. The bishop therefore sent secretly for the nurse, and baptised the little boy without their knowledge. The party then travelled on, and the parents continued to put off their son's baptism until they forgot it altogether. The nurse said nothing, and the boy grew up without their knowing the truth. Thus, before the marriage could take place, the young man was obliged to go through the ceremonies following on baptism, and in addition to make his first confession and communion. With so much to do, it is not surprising that he was not ready to be married till midnight.

It has been said that sermons were too numerous rather than too few during the great reign. At Court, however, and in fashionable churches, where the ministrations of the finest orators could be commanded, attendance at a course of sermons was considered a very profitable pastime. It is true that the sermons delivered were of the highest order. The general history of sacred oratory from the time of Henri IV. to the end of the seventeenth century is not a complicated one. Before Saint François, sermons had been few and singularly inadequate in substance. While *prévôt* of the Chapter of Geneva, he alone seems to have taken preaching as a serious duty. His father is reported to have thus rebuked him: "Provost, you preach too much. Even on week-days I hear the church-bell, and every time I am told 'It is the provost! It is the provost!' In my young days it was never so. Preachers were much rarer; but then, what preachers they were! There was more Greek and Latin in one of their sermons than there is in ten of yours!" The "grand manner" of the age, however, soon gave birth



to a taste for more emphatic oratory. When Saint François preached at the Chapel of the Visitation in Paris in 1618, the noble nuns confessed their disappointment at his extreme simplicity. They had expected something a little more striking from one so far along the road to canonisation. The news soon spread in Paris that Saint François was not a sufficiently elevated preacher to please the Sisters of the Visitation, and Saint Vincent de Paul, who loved his fellow-saint, enjoyed the story in his company. Between Saint François and Bossuet there flourished a race of mediocre orators whose sermons are remarkable for a dexterous progress from metaphor to metaphor rather than for solid thought. Still, the language was measured and not without a certain heavy pomp. Then came Bossuet, and with him began the age of great and powerful preaching.

The classic majesty of Bossuet's sermons is known to all. Even when a boy of twelve he was encouraged by the *habitués* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet to give extempore addresses, of which they made themselves the kindly critics. At sixteen he already preached in the proper sense of the word: by the time he was called to direct the penitential meditations of the Court, he had become the greatest of modern orators. From 1662 to 1669 his voice was heard in solemn seasons at the Louvre and at Saint-Germain, crying aloud to all mankind to turn from the vanity of a dying world, to remember their latter end, to put their trust in a God Who is eternal, the Lord and Giver of life. The tremendous pageantry of Isaiah's prophecies and the splendour of the Psalms found in him a mind created to reflect them. He *felt* the poetic books of the Old Testament as if he himself had held the pen that wrote them. That great elegy on the untimely death of Henriette d'Angleterre is not a fine paraphrase of Isaiah. It is the spontaneous record of images spontaneously evoked by the sight of one so full of vital spirit in the morning, yet cut down before another day had dawned. Bossuet preached at a period when the Court was in great need of a little plain speaking. That

he was no coward is proved by the fact that he publicly described the great Condé as "the most guilty of men" (*i.e.*, in the matter of his early rebellion). But his mind was so much occupied by the contemplation of general ideas, that the duty of running to earth particular vices was left to others. His successor, the Jesuit Bourdaloue, belonged to this more homely class of preachers. Bossuet was the field-marshal pointing out the road to be attained, and the plan of the campaign to be used against Satan. Bourdaloue, Gaillard, and Soanen of the Oratory were the generals charged with the direction of the actual march. Of these priests Bourdaloue was the one preferred by the fashionable world, partly, no doubt, because it enjoyed seeing a not too flattering portrait of itself drawn by a man who was afraid of no one. Bourdaloue was at Versailles in 1684, 1686, 1689, 1691, 1693, and 1697—far more frequently than any other preacher. He also delivered many courses of sermons before fashionable congregations in Paris. Madame de Sévigné, who had a pretty taste in oratory, was always ready to go any distance to hear him. "I was," she said, "made breathless by the extreme attention with which one is forced to hang upon his words, so full are they of vigour and truth. I only breathed again when he was pleased to pause before beginning another tirade of equal beauty." In the Lent of 1679 she writes: "Le Père Bourdaloue is thundering at Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie. He ought to preach in a more accessible place; there the crowd and the carriages cause such confusion that the traffic of all that district is thereby interrupted."

In the following Lent he was still "thundering." "After dinner we went to hear Le Père Bourdaloue, who always goes on hitting out to right and left like a deaf man, telling home-truths at headlong speed, running amuck against adultery. Save himself who can, for he turns aside for no man living." No topic, however dangerous, caused him to stop in his mad career. He handled the subject of Condé's rebellion even more explicitly than Bossuet, condemning the

prince's action as execrable, but pointing out that even when led furthest astray his heart was in truth not set against his King. Human frailty, not malice prepense, was signalised as the cause of his wrong-doing.

Condé, whether alive or dead, seems to have been frequently mentioned in the pulpit. The prince, when at the height of his fame, once wished to hear the Jansenist preacher Desmarets, who was, of course, never invited to preach at Court. Condé, as usual careless, arrived very late and caused considerable disturbance in the congregation. Desmarets recognised him, interrupted himself and thus addressed the prince: "Monseigneur, I am just explaining the passage in the Gospel where it is said that Jesus Christ healed a withered hand. It is a source of great pride to me that your Highness should come to increase the number of my hearers. I pray the Lord to preserve that arm which is the terror of all Europe and the blessing of all France. But, at the same time, I beg your Highness to remember that if you do not refer all your doings to God as your final end, God will permit your arm to wither like that in our Gospel."

An even plainer speaker was Soanen of the Oratory. It was to him that Louis XIV., that master of compliment, paid the famous tribute: "Father, I have listened to other preachers and have been much pleased with them; but when I hear you I am much displeased with myself."

Masillion did not begin to preach at Versailles till All Saints' Day, 1699. He was the last really distinguished orator to rouse the echoes of the great chapel, and with the new century began the age of mediocrity in oratory as well as in personality. The great men stole one by one into their silent graves, and their places were filled by imitators who "knew not Joseph."

The behaviour of the congregation in church, and especially during the sermon, was as varied as it was astonishing. People were then far more at ease in the house of God than they are at present, and conducted themselves there



more or less as if they were in their own homes. The conventions of society followed them even into church. It has been seen that a great man did not scruple to make a triumphal entry into a church in the middle of a service, and that a preacher did not hesitate to speak to individual members of the congregation in the course of his sermon. Nor was this liberty of speech exclusively the prerogative of the priest. His hearers, if moved, at once said so in no uncertain tones. The very servants of great families allowed themselves to take similar liberties, and to imitate the folly of their masters in the matter of etiquette. One of Madame de Rambouillet's footmen was very angry because the blessed bread was not brought to him soon enough. "Where," he grumbled, "is one to assert one's rank if it be not in church?" The poor were theoretically acknowledged to be especially beloved of God, but the news of any marked good fortune befalling a poor man was always received with a shade of astonishment. An official relation of the floods on the Loire in 1637 alludes with wonder to "the miracles which were worked for persons of quality *and others*," and the wording of the sentence seems to suggest the existence of some such feeling.

The church then was a place whither resorted the fashionable world to pay its respects to God and also to be seen of men. Rules touching conduct in church did not forbid conversation and walking about. Only the very strict refrained from doing these things, and it was distinctly a counsel of perfection not to whisper. Courtin thus lays down the law on the subject of behaviour in the sacred edifice. "If one is unfortunate enough to forget or to neglect to kneel down before God from slackness, laziness, or lack of devotion, one should at least do so from a sense of decency and on account of the persons of quality who may be present. . . . It is also very unbecoming to comb your hair or re-adjust your dress in church; you should go out to do these things. Do not embrace or compliment people in church, for you might thereby disturb others. . . . You



should also remain silent, and sit down during the sermon, and if you have a . . . cough, it is better to stay away than to interrupt the preacher and inconvenience the people sitting near you."

The practice of allowing girls to make collections for particular objects during the service gave rise to many abuses. To begin with, such prominence was an occasion of vanity to the more foolish of these young persons. Secondly, a little procession winding its way in and out among the seats caused serious confusion.

"Que la fille jamais n'aille dans le saint lieu  
Quester des cœurs pour elle et des deniers pour Dieu,"

was the advice of a priest to the father of the rising generation. For:—

"[Elle] qui s'occupe du soin de sauver le prochain  
Va parée en idole une bourse à la main,  
Passe de chaise en chaise en pompeux équipage,  
Fait marcher à sa suite et demoiselle et page,  
Sans honte, sans pudeur, en habits somptueux  
Ose ainsi demander pour les pauvres honteux."

Here is the testimony of another critic:—

"Aux jours que va quêter la charmante Bélise  
Elle furète de l'église  
Les quatre coins et le milieu,  
Et tous ceux que l'on voit donner à cette belle  
Donnent moins pour l'amour de Dieu  
Qu'ils ne donnent pour l'amour d'elle."

Courtin also gives a few directions with regard to the respect due to religious processions out of doors. Persons who met the funeral of a prince or legate were required to uncover and have their carriages stopped. Those who met a procession carrying the Blessed Sacrament were obliged to get out of their coaches and kneel on the ground. But even while attending to his duty to God, a man must not forget

the honour due to earthly greatness. "If then," says Courtin, "you are walking in such a procession with a man who is your social superior, see that he always remains on the right side of you, but do not mind if he is not always on the inside of the pavement; for it would be too unseemly in the presence of our Lord, who should have all our attention, to revolve, candle in hand, round a person of quality each time he crosses the gutter."

The path of the orthodox was thus made plain and hedged about with barriers to keep their feet from straying. The roads that skirted the domains of heresy or of open antagonism to Christian belief were made thorny in the hope that wanderers might find them too painful to tread. Of them something will be said in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XI

### BYE-WAYS OF RELIGION

IT will be seen from the preceding pages that the life of the really devout was beset with many griefs. It is from the letters of Saint François and of Fénelon that one may best gather what such a life really was. Madame de Maintenon's "Proverbs" also throw some light on the subject. But it is among the ranks of the semi-unorthodox that the most striking instances of piety are chiefly to be found, for those who could not find sufficient stimulus or response in conventional religion were impelled to seek them in remoter paths. Of these alternative homes for the soul Jansenism was the most widespread as well as the most excellent.

Its origin was as follows:—

During the early years of the seventeenth century, Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, had begun to make a stand against the party of those whose souls loved to dwell at ease. He saw the whole of mankind playing on the brink of a precipice and trifling with its eternal salvation. He acknowledged the Will of God to be the final Disposer of all things, and from this premise he advanced to the conclusion that the ultimate fate of every man is foreordained by Him. Hence the doctrine of fatalism and predestination which bears the name of its originator. Jansenism taught man that of himself he can do nothing. He has no free will. God imparts grace to those foreordained by Him to receive it, and who are predestined to salvation. Those whose names are not written among the elect will perish everlastingly. Even the elect shall hardly penetrate into the kingdom of Heaven; and since no man can tell whether he be among the saved, all must despise this present world

in order to qualify themselves for the next. In a few decades this gloomy doctrine had attracted a large number of the more ardent Catholics. It spread from the Low Countries into France and found adherents in the very Court of Louis XIV. Some of the greatest men of the time were among its supporters. That Jansenism was largely a lay movement is due to the fact that the appeal to reason made by it offered very serious obstacles to its acceptance by the clergy. Its chief proselytes were learned men of mathematical ability, and virtuous persons who perceived that it is only from within that a man's soul can be adequately ruled for good. Prohibitions, even when spoken by the Church, are not as potent as the prohibitions uttered by a man's own will. It follows as a consequence of these views that conversion now preluded a far more vital change in disposition than it had ever done before. Life became a very difficult science, directed by a general objective knowledge of cause and effect rather than by a number of subjective rules. Sobriety, austerity and caution were Jansenist characteristics. Curiously enough, profane learning, which for the Jansenists had no intrinsic value, found in Jansenist schools its chief home during the seventeenth century. The Jansenist view was that no method of broadening the mind should be neglected, and that a profound knowledge of history trained men for a more perfect comprehension of the eternal purposes of God.

The centre of the new movement in France was the Cistercian Abbey of Port-Royal in the valley of the Chevreuse. This ancient convent\* had become as degenerate as other religious houses during the sixteenth century, and in 1602, when the great Angélique Arnauld was appointed abbess of it, the rule had relaxed almost beyond recognition. Angélique was one of the twenty children of Arnauld the advocate, who had waged so fierce a war against the Jesuits. One of her sisters was the mother of the brothers Le Maitre. Another, Agnès, succeeded her as abbess, and three others

\* It was founded in 1204.



were nuns in the convent. Among her brothers were Arnauld d'Andilly, who had five daughters at Port-Royal, and Antoine Arnauld, author of the treatise *De la fréquente communion*. The whole family was deeply religious and eminently practical. Angélique had been made abbess while still a child. At the age of seventeen she began to reform her convent, and reintroduced the original rule, despite the protests of some of the nuns. In 1626 a branch house was founded in Paris, and the community then came into greater prominence. Ten years later Du Vergier de Haurenne, Abbé de Saint-Cyran, became the director of the nuns, and introduced the doctrine which was to find in the nuns its most ardent supporters. His views were narrow and gloomy, in spite of the fact that he cherished the memory of Saint François de Sales. To him resorted all persons who desired to be certified as to their hope of salvation, and very soon Port-Royal became the nucleus of all that was best in the nation. Men such as Le Maître and Antoine Arnauld left the world and retired to Port-Royal-in-the-Fields, where they lived in piety, study and contemplation, but without taking any religious vows. Others, like Pascal, withdrew thither from time to time to take stock of their spiritual possessions. Some built houses in the neighbourhood, so that gradually a little township grew up round the abbey. People came out from Paris to visit the "Solitaires" as the members of this irregular community were called, and discussed with them questions in theology or metaphysics. As soon as the word *heresy* began to be bandied in official circles regarding Port-Royal, the fascination of the word attracted many persons to brave convention and their own consciences by visiting the place. The Grande Mademoiselle, who seems to have gone thither on a commission from high quarters to spy out the land, was favourably impressed with the community. The children greatly pleased her, because they were neither stupid nor awkward. The aim of the education they enjoyed was to teach them how to behave in later life; the formation of their manners

therefore received especial attention, on the assumption that "manners makyth man."

The gentlemen of Port-Royal all had their distinctive duties. Some—as for instance, Pascal—were charged with the written defence of the community. Others translated classic works or compiled the Greek and Latin grammars in use in the schools. A few were set apart for the entertainment of visitors, and Arnauld d'Andilly, who had been in the world a leader of society, usually acted as guide round the grounds which it was his duty to keep in order. Each solitary did the work of his own cell and dug in the garden. M. le Maître even cleaned his shoes, and Pascal used to make his own bed, but was forbidden to sweep out his cell on account of his delicate health.

The novelty of the life at Port-Royal, and above all the doctrine there professed, created a great impression on the King and Court, and it was the amount of public attention bestowed on Jansenism which brought about the ruin of the abbey. That the Port-Royalists were Jansenists in the milder sense of the word it is difficult to deny; to charge them with heresy is ridiculous. The Church saw in them indocile children, anxious to break away from discipline and to imitate the Protestants in setting up human reason as the arbiter of human conduct. The Jesuits more especially accused them of seeking to diminish the prestige of the Holy See. They were also loath to observe the education of children and the direction of men's consciences in any hands but their own. As for the King, his sympathies were, by inheritance and upbringing, on the side of orthodoxy and his old friends the Jesuits. Personally, also, he could not but condemn a sect that refused to submit to authority which had himself for its first source. His ignorance did not permit him to judge the question of the value of Jansenism on its own merits, and his superstitious fear of heresy made it impossible for him to show mercy to the persecuted party. Saint-Simon, who did not hate the Jansenists, thus records a little episode which illustrates

the King's bigotry on this point. The Duc d'Orléans had chosen one Fontpertuis, suspected of Jansenism, to be his companion on a journey. "At that name, the King at once assumed an expression of great sternness. 'What, nephew,' said the King . . . 'Fontpertuis—the son of that Jansenist woman—of that mad creature who spent her time in running after M. Arnauld? I will not suffer you to be intimate with such a man!' 'I'faith, Sire,' replied the duke, 'I have not the least idea what the mother's conduct may have been, but as to the son, I will answer for *his* not being a Jansenist, for he does not even believe in God!' 'Do you really mean to say so?' answered the King, his severity relaxing. 'Nothing could be more certain,' replied M. d'Orléans; 'I can assure you of it.' 'If that is true,' said the King, 'there is nothing to which I can object—you can take him with you.' Most people," continues Saint-Simon, "laughed heartily at the episode; but there were a few wiser persons present who felt more inclined to weep than to laugh on seeing to what a height the King's self-deception had been encouraged by others to grow."

In society the Jansenists enjoyed a far better reputation. Lancelot, one of the "Solitaires," was invited to become the tutor of the young Conti princes. The Abbé Singlin, who became the director of Port-Royal on the death of Saint-Cyran, was also the adviser of many great persons, although his excessive severity frightened the more timid. Madame de Sévigné and Madame de la Fayette dabbled much in Jansenism. The Duc de Liancourt built a house at Port-Royal in order to be near the "Solitaires" during part of the year. It is to this duke that we indirectly owe the most mordant of French polemics, the Provincial Letters of Pascal. Liancourt had sent his granddaughter to be brought up at Port-Royal. An orthodox priest, hitherto his confessor, refused to give him absolution unless he would promise to remove her from that nest of heresy. The story soon became public property, and after several preliminary skirmishes between Arnauld and the Sorbonne, the great Pascal himself took up arms—a fine



duelling sword rather than a cudgel—to silence the enemies of his party. The Jesuits were for a time repulsed, but their subsequent attack proved all the more bitter on account of their temporary humiliation.

The most curious fine lady who elected to honour Port-Royal with her presence—no doubt to the great discomfort of its usual inhabitants — was the Marquise de Sablé, a member of the Longueville clique and a friend of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld. Madame de Sablé was a languid beauty, whose hobby in later life especially was to pose as an interesting invalid. She remained to her death a very beautiful person, splendidly tall, with an imperial head crowned with an aureole of fair hair. Her nonchalance suited her admirably. She took pleasure in the admiration and love she excited in all the men of her acquaintance, but followed the precepts of *Le Grand Cyrus*, in making no return to her lovers. The latter were numerous and their ascendancy was of short duration. The most interesting of them was the poet Voiture, a worthy man, who wore fine ruffles and wrote verses that were not without a really marked distinction. His foible was vanity, and it was probably the position of lover of a very great lady rather than love of the great lady herself that caused him to tolerate her snubs for so long a period. His captivity to a foolish love brought out the worst points of what would otherwise have been an attractive disposition. Attention bestowed by his mistress on other men at once reduced him to sulkiness, and a desire to appear to be on equal terms with his social superiors drew from him certain impertinences, which in another he would have been the first to condemn. He never allowed his friends to see the letters he received from the Marquise, in order to make them think he enjoyed far greater favour than was really the case. Once he carried his vanity to the point of pretending to go on a visit to Madame de Sablé, who had gone into Maine expressly stipulating that no one should follow her thither. Voiture set out upon the road at a time, and in a manner, that would attract attention and start a report that he alone



was privileged to visit the recluse. A few miles out of the city he turned, came back to Paris by another road, and lay in concealment for a suitable time. His childishness and folly ended by disgusting "La belle Parthénie (Madame de Sablé's name in *Le Grand Cyrus*), and Voiture was dismissed.

Madame de Sablé now began to give religion some place in her life. Her time was largely spent at Port-Royal, where she imagined the air to be wholesome, in spite of the dampness of the soil. Her one care was to preserve her health and to avoid the thought of death. Like Madame de Montespan, she feared even to sleep heavily, because sleep is the image of death. Her women also were expected to sit up while she slept, so that they might wake her from time to time by making a slight noise.

She lay on her bed during most of the day, or played battledore and shuttle-cock to keep herself in health. Indeed, nothing short of the prospect of catching some infectious disease could rouse her to real energy. A friend with a cold in the head became an enemy to be avoided at all costs. The very doctors who attended her were suspects, because they had presumably attended other persons whose diseases they might transmit to the Marquise. When she was obliged to run the risk thus involved, she retired to bed to await the fatal visit. The doctors were requested on entering the house to change all they had on, and to appear before the patient in dressing-gowns provided for the purpose. They were, however, forbidden to approach her, and all intercourse between them was through Mademoiselle de Chalais, the companion, who walked up and down the great room bearing messages from one camp to the other. M. de Nemours was once the occasion of much trouble to the household, for he happened to mention that he had seen a servant of Mademoiselle's who had smallpox. Madame de Sablé was terror-struck, and directly her visitor went, the room was carefully fumigated to kill the germs that might have been imported into it on the person of the duke.

The following letter is one of three written to Madame de Sablé by Julie de Rambouillet, who had been nursing Mademoiselle de Bourbon\* during an attack of smallpox. "I am sure I cannot begin too early to put our business in hand; for I am certain that between the first offer to see me and the accomplished fact, you will have so much to consider, so many doctors to consult and so many fears to conquer, that I shall have plenty of time to disinfect myself. The terms I offer are: First, that I shall not go near you till three days have passed without my entering the Hôtel de Condé: I shall change all my things of whatever kind; then I shall wait for a frosty day. I shall stop at four paces from you. I shall sit on the same seat all the time. You on your side can have a large fire in your room, you can burn juniper berries in the four corners, and also enclose yourself in a magic circle of vessels of vinegar, rue and absinthe. If you think your safety warranted by these suggestions without my being obliged to cut off my hair, I promise faithfully to carry them out. And if you want cases in point to keep your spirits going, why, I can tell you that the Queen was quite ready to see M. de Chaudebonne as soon as he came out of Mademoiselle de Bourbon's room, that Madame d'Aiguillon, who has a pretty taste in such matters, and whom no one could reproach with indifference on such a point, has just sent word to me that if I will not go to see her, she will come to fetch me."

The poor woman hardly ever enjoyed a moment immune from fear, for danger seemed to beset her on every side. She once found herself in the Faubourg Saint-Germain entirely cut off from her home in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, because every road thither might prove a path to death. That over the Pont-Neuf was impossible, because when last crossing the bridge the lady had caught sight of a little boy having very evident marks of smallpox on him. She would in no case have come into contact with such a person, but the servants might have caught the disease in driving him

\* Madame de Longueville.

away, then transmitted it to their mistress. The other route by the Pont-Rouge was equally to be avoided, because the planks of that bridge creaked and groaned whenever a carriage passed over it. What then more likely than that the planks might give way at the wrong moment and precipitate the carriage and servants and the Marquise herself into the water beneath? Under these circumstances it was thought safer to avoid both bridges by making a tremendous round over the Pont-Notre-Dame which, although offering all the usual risks peculiar to a bridge, was not stigmatised by any especial drawback.

For several decades life at Port-Royal moved peacefully, in spite of some opposition from hostile persons at Court. The schools improved, and finished Jansenists were sent out to spread their doctrines in the world. Their standard of scholarship was the highest known, and the very language was purified and enriched by their efforts. A few words used in a special sense were peculiar to Port-Royal, and phrases such as "esprit lumineux," with the adjective used metaphorically, owe their origin to the Jansenists. Comments on the beauty of the style used by young Arnauld in his book *De la fréquente communion* were met by d'Andilly with the remark: "There is nothing astonishing in that—he is merely speaking the language of the house."

The active persecution of the Port-Royalists began in 1638 by the imprisonment of Saint-Cyran at the command of Richelieu on a vague charge of unorthodoxy. The "Solitaires" were also bidden to leave Port-Royal-des-Champs. The teaching of Jansenius, embodied in a work published in 1640 and called, *Augustinus*, because it was alleged to be founded on the writings of Saint Augustine, now became a bone of contention between Jesuit and Jansenist. The book was examined by approved theologians and by them condemned. In 1656 it was formally condemned by the Sorbonne, the bishops, and the Pope. Four years later the schools at Port-Royal were closed, and during all this period, pressure was being put upon the nuns to compel



them to sign an abjuration of their "heresy." In 1664 twelve of the most determined nuns were distributed among other convents, in order to win from them a recantation. The house in Paris was closed in 1665. This petty persecution dragged on for many years, despoiling the adherents but not killing the doctrines of Jansenism, until, in 1710, the entire monastery, the den of the hydra, was razed to the ground. The principles there taught lingered on into the nineteenth century, and even now the more fervent members of certain sects are in essence Jansenists without knowing it.

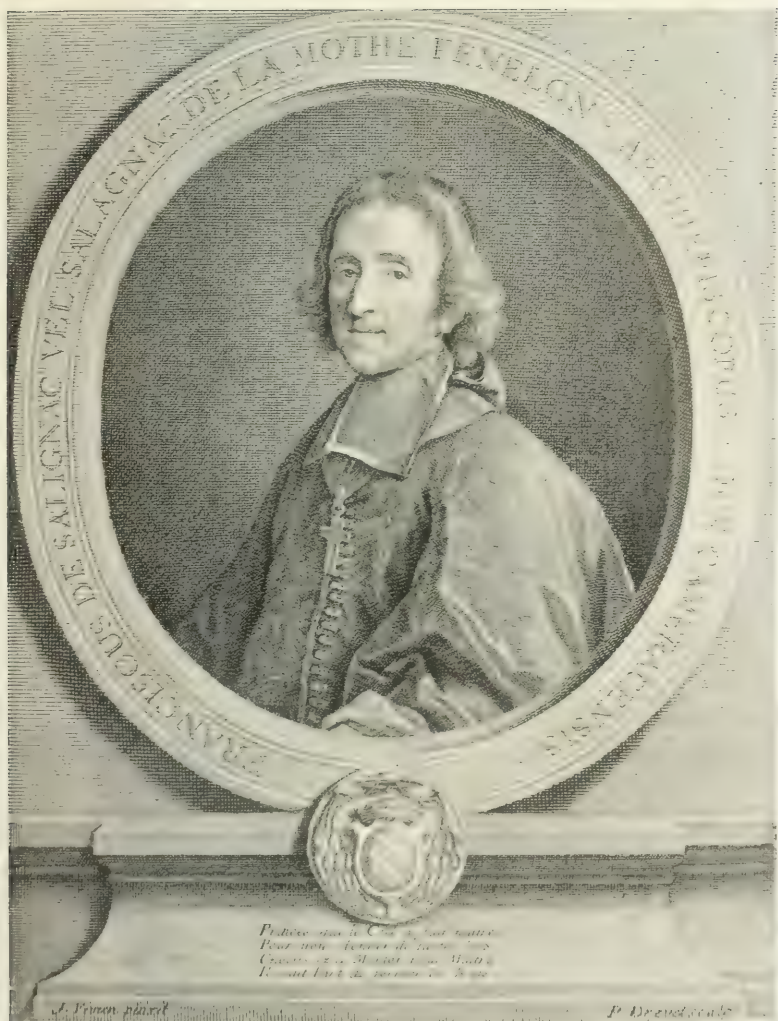
The contention with Jansenism was not the only religious dispute of the period. No sooner had the French bishops penetrated to the thick of the quarrel than they found themselves with another on their hands, and that one which brought them into opposition to one of their own number. This prelate was Fénelon. A Spanish priest named Molinos had been condemned by Rome in 1687 for teaching that the soul should train itself to be quiescent before God. It should gradually lose all desire, all consciousness of dogma, discipline and duty imposed by external rules. It should be so far absorbed and permeated by the love of God that no thoughts nor actions should be possible except those suggested directly from above. A religion which thus placed will and grace above works was naturally believed to have some affinity with Jansenism. But as a matter of fact the distance between the two doctrines is enormous, for Quietism taught that grace alone is sufficient to save a man, whereas Jansenism taught that grace is impotent unless man will co-operate with it to save his own soul. It was a theory very acceptable to the mystic mind, for it eliminated all mental effort except that to become a channel for God's grace. The wholesome temper of Madame de Sévigné could not tolerate so diaphanous a creed. "Give religion a little more body," cried she, "for it is being so much subtilized that soon it will have evaporated altogether." ("Epaississez-moi un peu la religion qui s'évapore toute à force d'être subtilisée.")

Condemnation led, as usual, to an especial florescence of



the doctrine censured. In France the chief exponents of Quietism were a priest named Lacombe and that very curious person Madame Guyon. The latter especially had a large number of friends whom her persuasive tongue won over to mysticism. Among them was actually Madame de Maintenon, who allowed her to live and teach at Saint-Cyr until caution dictated her expulsion in 1696. The very palace of the great King became a school for Quietism, and when the Court was at Marly, members of the House of Beauvilliers and Mortemart were in the habit of slipping off to Versailles to sit in rows before Madame Guyon and learn abstraction of mind.

But the greatest conquest made by Madame Guyon was that of Fénelon. His was a character eminently suited to the reception of this type of doctrine. No man was even less vulgar, less abrupt, less commonplace. He was ever conscious of his great position as lord and bishop; exquisite in conduct, hating coarseness of mind or manner. "Un esprit coquet," said Saint-Simon, who hated him: "a charming man," said the great ladies of the Court, who saw in him an ideal entertainer. "A good priest," said the sick paupers in the hospitals which he visited. He was, in truth, all these things at once. His pride might almost have been labelled vanity, so loath was he to acknowledge himself in the wrong, so glad was he to be beloved by others. His personal charm was as undefinable as that of Mary Queen of Scots or Cleopatra. He captured all in his "strong toils of grace." His ripe judgment and learning earned for him the admiration of scholars; his distinguished conversation and gracious breeding impressed the nobles and the bourgeoisie. The soldiers nursed in his palace during the war acknowledged that his humanity was of a practical kind. Above all, his love for little children assured all men that beneath his self-consciousness lurked a real simplicity of mind that nothing could corrupt. He was in the habit of writing to Madame Guyon to tell her about his state of mind. "When I am alone," he wrote in one such letter, "I some-



FRANÇOIS DE SALIGNAC DE LA MOTHE FÉNELON, ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAI

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY DREVET, AFTER THE PAINTING BY PIRON



times play like a little child, even while saying my prayers." And again: "There is here a child two and a half years old with whom I sometimes play; but as for grown-up people, they worry me."

It is impossible here to enter into the long controversy between the supple Fénelon and the massive Bossuet on the subject of Quietism. Fénelon had espoused the cause of Madame Guyon and was involved in her condemnation. Madame Guyon suffered persecution and imprisonment. Fénelon was exiled to his diocese of Cambrai and his friends were obliged to leave the Court. But the pleasure of duelling with an antagonist who knew no artifice certainly led Fénelon to look upon the contest as a trial of skill. By a singular stroke of genius he submitted at the right moment, showing so great an anxiety to obey the voice of the Church that a reaction in his favour was at once created. Bossuet was flooding France with documents justifying his action. Fénelon reserved his defence for the Roman Court alone, so that in French eyes he soon became a persecuted victim of personal spite. Bossuet's was the sounder theology, Fénelon's the greater *savoir vivre*. Fénelon was, moreover, the herald of the humanitarian and philosophic eighteenth century.

In the history of seventeenth-century Protestantism there is little that can on any pretext be called social. The Church was as much determined to root out Protestantism in its religious aspect as the Government was to destroy it as a political party. The *dragonnades* were attempts to slay the public opinion of certain districts by the terror of the sword, and that these raids were often followed by an external change of religion was certainly a fact. Many persons became Catholics simply to save their families from starvation. One Jean de Crest in the Dauphiné, suffered himself to be converted by violence for the sake of bringing peace to his house. His journal is but a catalogue of atrocities committed in the name of religion. "Two men," he records, "have been hanged on a charge of hearing



Protestant sermons. May God be blessed and praised for everything!" Again: "On the 9th of October 1689, two men were hanged at Suze for the same reason. May God be praised!"

It would be impossible to conclude a chapter on the religious standpoint of the seventeenth century without some allusion to the belief in sorcery which still lingered in all classes of society. The relation between this superstition and religion was at that time very intimate. The boundaries of the natural and the supernatural were but ill-defined. Science was still in swaddling-bands, and anything not understood was at once attributed to the agency of either good or bad influences. Hence the miracles and portents on one hand, and the ghosts, spells and witcheries on the other, that exercised the minds of prelates, chemists, and even the superintendents of police in the great century. Some supernatural occurrences were of such a nature that precaution against them was possible. For instance, the tragic end of Henri IV. was universally attributed to the fact that he was the sixty-third King of France. This number is doubly unlucky because it is a multiple of nine and seven, both of which have mystic meanings. The burning of the law-courts on 7th March 1618, was thought to be a judgment of God on national sin, and some persons even went so far as to say they had seen a "flaming star a cubit in length and a foot across," descend on the building.

Superstitions connected with certain things and seasons were very common, especially among the lower classes. In 1674 the Bishop of Grasse was obliged to issue a pastoral injunction forbidding people to plunge the statue of their patron saint into a pond, in order to induce him to grant their petitions. To abstain from meat on Easter Day cured fever, and eggs laid on Good Friday put out fires. The church key made red-hot by the priest and applied to the skins of persons and animals was a preventive to madness. Above all, those who desired really satisfactory results from their use of holy water

were careful to keep it in a vessel of particular shape. The custom of breaking egg-shells before throwing them away in order to prevent the witches from crossing the water in them has survived to the present day. Innumerable superstitions connected with food, the burning of candles, and the occurrence of certain numbers gave cause for alarm to the timid, who saw in them so many portents of evil, or of good no less disconcerting.

All these beliefs were but reminders of the existence of a region beyond the ken of human understanding. Ghosts, on the other hand, were actual messengers from the kingdom of shadows itself. Those who came as the harbingers of death naturally awakened terror. In the case of ghosts of persons already dead, no particular terror beyond that occasioned by the unknown and unintelligible was felt by the beholder. These beings had passed into another sphere, but their mortality, though shaken off, formed a link of sympathy between them and the living. The Grande Mademoiselle, once sleeping in the same room with her friend Madame de Frontenac, awoke to find the curtains of the bed being drawn back. "Are you dreaming?" cried she, "to open the curtains at this hour?" "It is only the wind," replied the other. A few moments after the curtain flapped again, and Mademoiselle, a little nervous, invited Madame de Frontenac into her bed. The next morning news arrived that Mademoiselle's foster-brother had been killed. "I did not doubt," said Mademoiselle on hearing of it, "that it was he who came to say good-bye to me, and I had Masses said for him."

A harmless ghost of this description did nothing worse than rouse pity for its presumably unhappy state. But an apparition of the devil or of his satellites in person, was a very different matter. The good, except for the purpose of temptation, seldom beheld the Prince of Darkness. But the wicked, those who had entered into solemn compact with him, were subject to periodic visitations, until that dreadful day when he came to claim them for his own. The "miraculous and admirable history of the Comtesse de Hornoc, a

Flemish lady, strangled by the devil because she did not consider her collar well goffered, on the 15th of April 1616," was printed by one Richard Pailly at Lyons. This pamphlet naturally caused a fearful sensation all over the country, in which there was no doubt a vast number of ladies who were dissatisfied with their washerwomen. The tale runs as follows: The Comtesse was not a good woman, for she was greedy and given to using violent language. In the December preceding the tragedy, her washerwoman sent home the Comtesse's best ruffles badly goffered. The lady, who had wished to wear them at a feast the same night, swore that she would give herself to the devil if she wore the ruffles. Another woman then tried to iron them, but without better result. At this juncture a personage "of high stature and dressed in black," appeared before the Comtesse and thus addressed her: "Madam, you are angry? What is the matter? If I can help you I shall be pleased to do so." "It is a fine thing," replied the Comtesse, "that in the whole town I cannot find a woman capable of ironing a collar properly." Here her woman brought in more collars, but the Comtesse in a fury trampled them under foot. Thereupon the devil (for it was he) produced a magnificent ruffle from under his cloak. The Comtesse was charmed with it and begged him to put it on her, promising that if he did so she would be his, "body and soul." Satan put the ruffle round her neck, but as soon as it was fastened he wrung her neck, so that she died on the spot. The servants were too much frightened to interfere, and the devil, having smashed all the mirrors in the room, vanished from their ken. The relations of the dead woman were anxious to attribute her demise to natural causes. Priests were fetched and a funeral arranged. But when they came to carry away the coffin, not even a team of horses could move it. The cover was then taken off, and inside was nothing but a black cat, which escaped and was lost in the crowd. "This adventure," concludes the narrator, "should serve as a mirror and example to all those Jezebels whose one aim it is to appear before the



world as much beruffled and painted as possible, with false hair and ten thousand trashy devices to ornament their miserable body which in the end is but a carcase. God grant that this story may profit them and induce them to amend their faults. Amen."

This lady had succumbed to the temptation of wishing to be well dressed, and her introduction to the devil was, one may say, incidental rather than the result of deliberate intention. Far worse was the case of those who, according to current belief, courted the attention of Satan and used their familiarity with him in order to impose on others. The *Diogène françois* of 1617 contains "an appalling story of two magicians strangled during Holy Week 1615." "I am horrified," observes the author of this work, "to behold this pest of sorcery, which is not only condemned by divine law, but also abhorred . . . by the very pagans themselves, as the poet Virgil demonstrates." Having also called in Jeremiah and Horace in support of his opinion, the writer goes on to describe a sorcerer called Cæsar, who had a familiar spirit called Sophocles. This demon visited his master in the Bastille and strangled him, according to the invariable custom of such beings. The other prisoners were witnesses of these occurrences, which, opines the author, were only too common, for "the raising of black clouds, the calling up of flames, frost, thunderstorms and lightning, the disturbing of the elements are all among Satan's pastimes. In northern countries even little children play a thousand of these tricks by way of amusement." (The north was ever a stronghold of evil. The gopeller at Mass faces north in order to symbolise the voice of the Church proclaiming good tidings "to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.")

Many other compacts with the devil are recorded with horror by seventeenth-century newsmongers. One Michel even kept a demon corked up in a phial, to the great terror of the other inhabitants of his native town of Moulins. Justice soon clapt him in prison, although it was not strong



enough to bar the doors against the demons who visited him. Hearing of this, the Head of the Jesuit College sent him an "Agnus Dei" to keep off the devil, not, however, without intimating to him that a contrite heart would serve the purpose even better.

One philanthropist, anxious to warn his contemporaries of the sad fate reserved for those who use such practices, went to the trouble of collecting a vast number of terrible stories, in order to keep the timid from dabbling in even white magic. The Rosicrucians were his especial terror, and he cites no less than eight instances of disaster following on attempts to correspond with the devil. One young man was compelled by Satan to strangle himself with his garters. Another—a Gascon—was being carried over a lake on the frontier of Bavaria by his demon, when a clap of thunder so much frightened the fiend that he let the Gascon fall into the water "in the presence of seven or eight fishermen." Six other stories point the same moral. And the only reason for our not hearing of more deaths resulting from diabolic strangulation is that "when their time has come, the victims leave their houses and go forth alone to satisfy the justice of Satan. The reader must not doubt," continues the moralist, "that not only in Paris, but in all the large towns of France, there are persons who are worse than fiends, persons who make game of the immortality of the soul, and who deny the existence of God." "But," another such writes, "I will not enlarge on proof of the immortality of the soul, because the Holy Books and the Church and Saint Augustine see to that. But so that this little discourse may deter the curious from this form of curiosity, and may profit those who are already enrolled in the devil's chartulary, let us pray to God together, for God has power over the devil: and even if the devil has the promise of a human creature signed and written with blood, he can be forced to bring back the contract. It is our duty to pray for such, since they are our neighbours; and if they are unworthy of this charity, our prayers will answer some other purpose. Amen."

The belief in magic, then, was pretty nearly universal. Magicians chiefly belonged to one of two types. Either they were adventurers who sought to gain their own ends by imposing on the credulity of their neighbours, and then blackmailing or beguiling them into submission; or else they were persons of feeble or deranged intellect, whom the glamour or the fear of magic had so far subjugated that they really believed themselves to possess occult powers.

There was also a large though subordinate class of dabblers in the black arts, consisting of the victims of the professional sorcerers. Women, such as the two nieces of Mazarin, nearly paid a heavy price for their amusement. So great had the credit of sorcerers become by about 1675, that the Chief of Police was hard put to it to prevent trials for sorcery from monopolising the entire energies of justice. The case of La Voisin is dealt with in a previous chapter. Suffice it here to add that the ridicule poured on superstitious people in *La Devineresse* as surely slew the sorcerers as Don Quixote slew the Chivalrous Romance. The eighteenth century took on from its birth a far healthier tone. The Church itself, which had burnt the curé Urbain Grandier not so very long before, ceased to see the devil in every scientific experiment. Men laughed at their own follies and were thereby cured. Religion had stripped off yet another of her mediæval fetters, and men walked abroad delivered from the fear of a fiend ready to snatch them down into the burning pit. That they were at the same time tempted to lose the fear of God was the result of a general emancipation from traditional modes of thought. Men gasped for a freer air. The Queen of Navarre had likewise gasped nearly two centuries before. Her conclusion had been—"Where the Spirit is, there is Liberty." The early eighteenth century believed itself to have found a larger liberty than had been ever known before. But men knew in their hearts that its name was Licence, and had therefore not the audacity to cover it with an outward show of religion. The scepticism of the seventeenth century became at least

honest as it stepped into the eighteenth, and the Church herself was a gainer by the change, in that she was thereby purified from much untruth. The pendulum has swung to and fro many times since the days of Louis XIV. We have discarded, and re-adopted, and again discarded many beliefs that he and his century held dear. But although men and manners must change and be forgotten, human nature can suffer no discredit. The ages roll on fulfilling one another, and the men of the past, who are flesh of our flesh, are nearer to us in mind and in heart than we think. And to receive them into our human sympathy, and to think of them as friends, is to experience a benefit past all telling.

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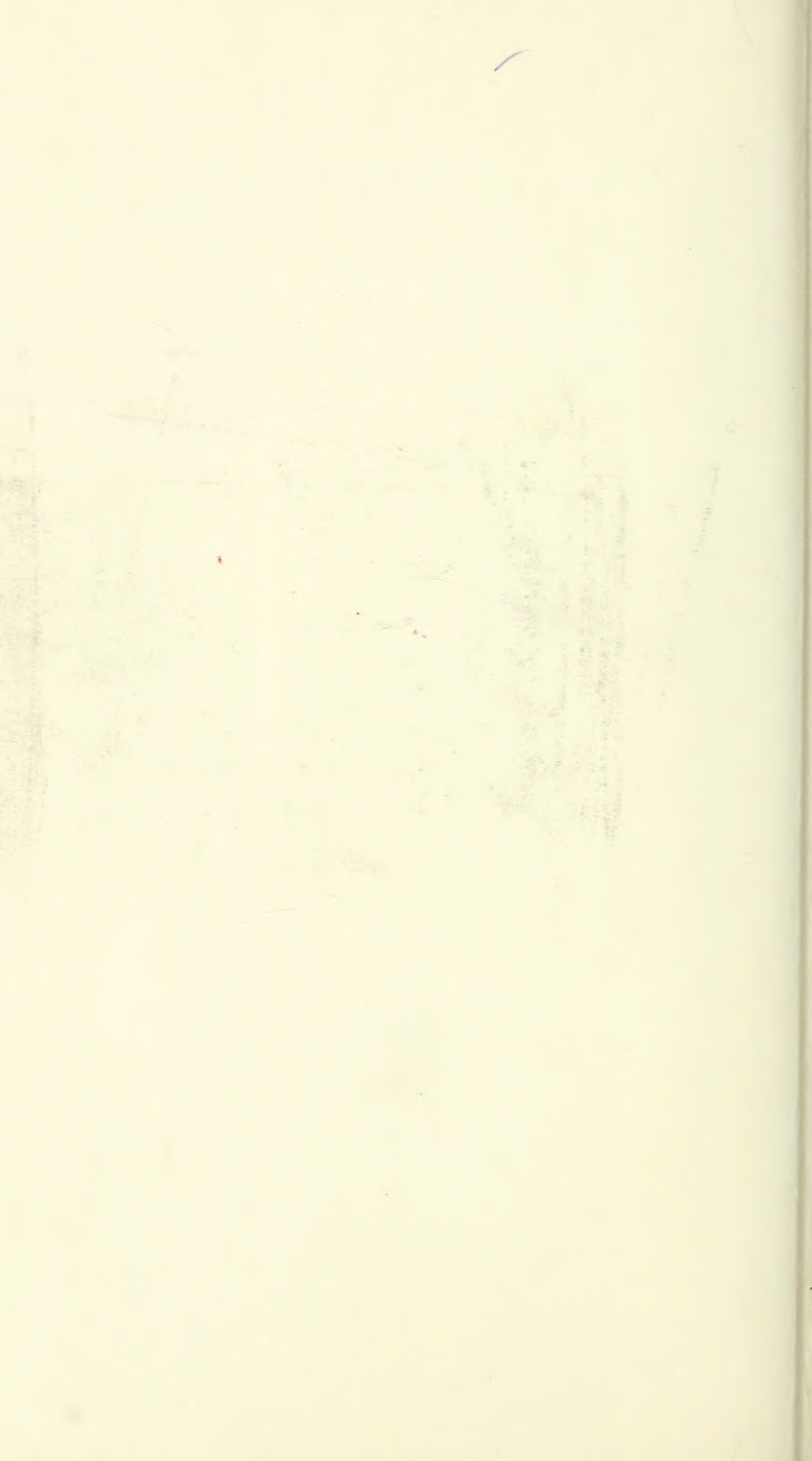
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